

**Ghana in Search of Government Accountability in Controlling Political Corruption: Are
the Private Mass Media Part of the Solution or the Problem?**

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By

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ABSTRACT

In democratic settings, private mass media are often considered a powerful force against political corruption, which is one of the major impediments to development in Ghana's fourth republic. Guided by the theories of democracy, the media as watchdog, structuration and the public sphere, this dissertation uses a mainly qualitative methodology to answer this question: "Can private mass media play any constructive role in fighting political corruption in emerging democracies such as Ghana?" The findings indicate that private media are a part of both the problem and the solution regarding political corruption. Private mass media contribute to fighting political corruption by providing a forum for anti-corruption discourse, exposing political corruption, creating awareness, mobilizing for anti-corruption reforms and demanding political accountability. At the same time, they also aggravate the problem via biased reporting, propaganda peddling, media corruption and failure to do consistent investigative and follow-up reporting on political corruption. The results also indicate that an interplay of factors – including democratic freedoms, ownership interests, funding, competition, access to information, and the influences of historical legacies and civil societies – shapes the watchdog role of the private mass media. This dissertation extends our substantive understanding of the contested watchdog responsibilities of the private media and examines the implications these findings have for policy, theory and further research.

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DEDICATION

For my late parents, Madam Grace Afia Serwaa and Mr. Kofi Asumah.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although political corruption¹ – the unauthorized use of power to advance private interests by top-level government officials – is a global problem, in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, it is one of the major barriers to development (Abdulai, 2009; Mafukata, 2015; Otusanya, 2011). As a result of political corruption and bad governance, sub-Saharan Africa remains one of the poorest regions in the world despite its abundant natural resources and the flow of development aid into this region (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Owoye & Bissessar, 2014; Transparency International, 2014; Venter, 2012). In sub-Saharan Africa, as Mafukata (2015, p. 89) argues, political elites seek power to promote opportunities for themselves and their allies to accumulate wealth rather than deepening democracy and promoting inclusive socio-economic development. Hence, citizens in most sub-Saharan African countries, including Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Angola, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ghana, are unhappy about the high rate of corruption, particularly elite corruption that stalls development (Transparency International, 2018a). The growing body of literature on political corruption in sub-Saharan Africa attests to the threat it poses to development efforts in this region (Adebayo, 2013; Mafukata, 2015; Olken & Pande, 2012; Sadiq & Abdullahi, 2013; Schwella, 2013; Transparency International, 2018a, 2018b; Uneke, 2010; Wilson, 2014; Wrong, 2009).

Political corruption mostly redirects into private bank accounts national resources earmarked for development, such as social infrastructures and poverty-alleviation programs (Gray, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2013; Lowenstein, 2013; Schwella, 2013; Transparency International, 2014; Uneke, 2010; Wrong, 2009). As one of the former United Nations' Secretary General has noted,

When public money is stolen for private gain, it means fewer resources to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities. When foreign aid is diverted into private bank accounts, major infrastructure projects come to a halt. Corruption enables fake or substandard medicines to be dumped on the market, and hazardous

¹ Some analysts argue that corruption, such as bribery, can help reduce red tape to accomplish things more quickly (see, for example, Guhan, S. & Paul, S. (1997). *Corruption in India: Agenda for action*. New Delhi: Vision Books; Theobald, R. (1990). *Corruption, development and underdevelopment*. Basingstroke: Macmillan). This argument is flawed since any payment of rent to achieve such fast-track service indicates an inefficient or a dysfunctional bureaucratic set up, which ought to be overhauled.

waste to be dumped in landfill sites and oceans. The vulnerable suffer first and worst. (Ki-moon, 2009, p. 1).

Mr. Ki-moon's insightful statement exemplifies the harm that corruption does to society. This negative impact makes it imperative to address corruption that mainly stems from poor governance in which institutions of accountability hardly function to ensure government accountability (Owoye & Bissessar, 2014; Venter, 2012).

Against this backdrop one of the critical components of anti-corruption reforms grounded in democratization processes to ensure accountable governance is free and independent media to act as a check on the powers of public officials (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). Theoretical insights and empirical observations, however, present a mixed picture on this watchdog role of the mass media. On the one hand, the theory of the media as a watchdog that incorporates the concept of the fourth estate, social responsibility theory and liberal theory suggests that mass media should perform watchdog functions over the government to ensure democratic accountability (Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Hachten, 1981, 1992; McQuail, 2005, 2010). By implication, the independent private mass media can and should check political corruption. Some empirical research evidence demonstrates that the free and independent private mass media often function as a critical resource for tackling political corruption by conducting investigations to uncover corruption, providing a forum for discussing corruption and mobilizing for anti-corruption reforms (Camaj, 2012; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016). Significant factors that encourage the anti-corruption efforts of the mass media include free speech, the freedom and independence of the press, the rule of law, unrestricted access to information and the safety or security of anti-corruption media personnel (Camaj, 2012; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016).

On the other hand, some empirical evidence also corroborates the theory of the public sphere that contemporary private media serve ruling interests by failing intentionally to perform a critical watchdog role, such as exposing political corruption and galvanizing public support to address the problem (Besley & Prat, 2006; Habermas, 1989; Mills, 1951, 1999; Omojola, 2010; Vaidya, 2005; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). Research shows that mass media contribute to the problem of corruption through the pursuit of ownership interests, biased reporting, propaganda peddling, media corruption, and failure to undertake investigative and follow-up reporting (Omojola, 2010; McMillan & Zoido, 2004; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). The factors that

compromise the watchdog role of the private commercial mass media include ownership pressure, profit-maximization motives, political (government) pressures, a harsh economic environment, media corruption and poor working conditions, such as meager salaries (Besley & Prat, 2006; Omojola, 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). In contrast, the middle-ground school of thought argues that while the media tend to advance the interests of influential actors, they have not failed altogether to perform their watchdog responsibilities to society (Barnet & Gaber, 2001). Some empirical research confirms this claim of the middle-ground perspective on the media's watchdog role (Jarso, 2010; Haque, 2012).

In the Ghanaian context, for example, no in-depth empirical study has been conducted to investigate whether private mass media can make any meaningful contributions to the fight against political corruption since the country returned to a democratic rule in 1992. Given this lack of a more recent empirical research and the conflicting theories and inconclusive empirical observations on the watchdog role of mass media as discussed, further research in this field is long overdue to update and improve our substantive understanding. This study, therefore, using the case of Ghana, intends to investigate the extent to which private mass media can hold the executive arm of government to account in transitional democratic settings.

In addition to producing empirical studies on the watchdog role of the media, scholars have also developed normative media theories that seek to elucidate what the mass media should and should not do in different geopolitical contexts rather than what the media do on the ground (Otini & Fung, 2002). These theories include the authoritarian, development, democratic participant, liberal and social responsibility. The social responsibility theory, for example, argues that mass media should play an active role in ensuring government accountability in democratic settings (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010). By emphasizing what the media ought to do, the normative media theory typically ignores the complex interaction of broader structural and agency factors, including journalists' professional knowledge in shaping the workings of the private mass media in practice. As a result, a new broad-based theoretical framework for analyzing the actual role of contemporary mass media is necessary. This study proposes such a comprehensive theoretical framework that incorporates Giddens' theory of structuration to illuminate the dynamics of the empirical functions of private media concerning whether they contribute to tackling political corruption in Ghana.

The reasons Ghana presents a unique opportunity for such an empirical inquiry into the possibility of mass media watchdogging or otherwise in developing democracies are tenable. First, the international community views Ghana as a model of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa given that the country has witnessed a peaceful transfer of political power from one political party to another through the ballot box since 1992 (Bekoe & Buchard, 2012; Kpodo, 2012; Woodward, 2009). In this regard, this study can serve as a microcosm of the extent if any to which democratic governance advances accountability and transparency to tackle political corruption in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Second, to further government accountability through effective media watchdogging, Ghana liberalized the media in 1992 (Republic of Ghana, 1996) and repealed the criminal libel law in 2001 (Abdulai, 2009; Dzisah, 2008). As a result, according to the Global Integrity Report (2016), the media are reportedly free in Ghana; however, whether the private media have used this press freedom to attempt to fight political corruption has yet to be investigated. Third, Ghana has witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of mass media since the country's transition to democracy in 1992 (National Communication Authority, 2017a, 2017b). It will be insightful to investigate whether the country has benefitted from this media proliferation in the fight against political corruption. Lastly, successive governments have promised to aggressively fight political corruption in Ghana's fourth democratic governance (Ablorh, 2016; Transparency International, 2018).

Political corruption, however, continues to be one of the critical national development and security challenges facing Ghana (Abdulai, 2009; Essel, 2015; Thompson, 2017). The extent to which the mass media can play its constitutionally mandated watchdog role and the outcomes of such media interventions on anti-corruption struggles and reforms in Ghana remain unclear. The existing literature contributes to the general understanding of corruption and the role of the mass media in deepening democracy in Ghana (Abdulai, 2009; Dzisah, 2008; Obeng-Odoom, 2014; Osei-Tutu, Badu, & Manu, 2009). Although they made a useful contribution to the literature, Asah-Asante and Brako (2014) provide a limited understanding of the contested media watchdog role against political corruption since they used secondary data and agenda-setting theory and generally focused on the media campaign against public-sector corruption. In-depth empirical research that focuses on examining whether or not the mass media play a constructive role in addressing political corruption is virtually nonexistent in the Ghanaian context. This research contributes to filling this void in the existing literature.

This research examines and documents the extent to which the mass media contribute to addressing or aggravating the problem of political corruption by elected and appointed members of the executive arm of government in Ghana's fourth republic. It focuses on pro-poor social intervention programs, such as poverty-alleviation schemes that the executive controls. Given that the executive is the principal administrative body responsible for overseeing the conduct of government business, it is critical to investigate how the executive deals with its cases of corruption amidst its anti-corruption rhetoric. Also key to this study is an examination of the role that privately-owned mass media play in holding this powerful administrative body to account.

This study focuses on privately-owned traditional mass media since evidence suggests that they are more efficient in ensuring government accountability than the state-owned mass media (Camaj, 2012; Gray, 2015; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1993; Srivastava, 2016; Staphenurst, 2000). In this study, therefore, private mass media focus on traditional privately-owned media organizations that use television, newspapers and radio as channels of communication for distributing information to a large audience in Ghana. The dissertation also includes limited Internet media, comprising online media outlets or electronic news reports that form an integral component of the traditional mainstream private mass media in the country.

The proposed theoretical framework guiding this study includes theories of democracy, the media as watchdog, public sphere and structuration, all of which are relevant for explaining the role of private mass media in political corruption in a democratic country such as Ghana. This proposed theoretical framework is appropriate since it provides a nuanced explanation of Ghana's political system, the social responsibility of the media (as per Article 162(5), Republic of Ghana, 1996) and the interplay of structural and agency factors that shape the practical performance of private media regarding political corruption. Democratic theory is relevant to this study as it elucidates the nature of Ghana's political system that structures the environment within which the mass media operate. Based on democratic theory, the current study investigates the enabling structural conditions, such as freedom of expression and association, and press freedom and autonomy from state control, necessary for performing critical media watchdog functions (Heywood, 2012; Fishkin, 2011; United Nations, 1996; Venter, 2012). Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration is also relevant to this study because it emphasizes the interplay of both structural and agency (such as journalists' motivations) factors in shaping the conduct of private mass media

in practice. This theory of structuration guides the current research to examine specific factors that shape the practical behavior and conduct of the private mass media in Ghana.

The watchdog theory, incorporating liberal, social responsibility and the fourth estate theories, applies to this study. As previous studies have indicated, watchdog theory illuminates the pathways, including agenda-setting and undercover investigations, which can expose corruption; based on these methods, mass media can promote government accountability in democratic settings (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Jarso, 2010; Srivastava, 2016), such as Ghana. Social responsibility theory, liberal theory, and the theory of the media as a fourth estate suggest that mass media should perform critical watchdog functions to check excesses of state power by, for example, fighting political corruption. These theories guide this dissertation to investigate how the private mass media may contribute to fighting political corruption in Ghana. The public sphere theory, in contrast, argues that the media contribute to the problem of political corruption given that they are a part of the corrupt power elites who control and manipulate the media to serve their private interests (Habermas, 1989; Mills, 1951, 1956). The current study uses this theory to investigate specific ways in which private mass media may add to the problem of political corruption in Ghana.

In light of the above discussions, the proposed theoretical framework, therefore, provides a more holistic explanation than would any single theory of the private mass media's role, if any, in fighting political corruption in Ghana. This proposed theoretical framework guides the current study to focus on answering this central research question: "Are private mass media part of the solution or the problem in the fight against political corruption in Ghana?"

Based on this research question, a qualitative methodology is considered appropriate to provide a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the research problem. The qualitative perspective is crucial for unpacking the contextual intricacies, including power dynamics that shape complex social issues (Bell, 1997; Silverman, 2005; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) such as political corruption, which is often shrouded in secrecy (Gray, 2015; Uneke, 2010). The qualitative approach also provides room for the flexibility needed to investigate the current research problem as a dynamic social process that keeps unfolding with twists and turns (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). In addition to using a qualitative methodology, this study includes a limited quantitative perspective to add a descriptive statistical component based on appropriate existing surveys – such as the African Afrobarometer Survey and World Value Survey – to examine public opinion about

the mass media in Ghana. To complement the qualitative textual analysis, the quantitative aspect of the methodology also includes content analysis of selected media reports from Joy and Peace FM online archives to analyze the nature and information sources of the media reports on political corruption (Dzisah, 2008; Haque, 2012).

The current research findings extend our current substantive knowledge about how the private commercial mass media may either help address or worsen the problem of political corruption in the emerging African democratic context using the case of Ghana. The findings also have implications for anti-corruption reforms and questions about the applicability (relevance) of Western theory in non-Western settings, such as sub-Saharan Africa.

This dissertation is structured into nine chapters. Chapter one has presented an overview of this study by outlining the research problem and goal, the theoretical framework, the central research question and the methodology. Chapter two discusses institutions, mass media, corruption and the existing empirical literature on the role of the mass media in (political) corruption. Chapter three presents a critical review of democratic theory, relevant press theories, Giddens's theory of structuration and a detailed discussion of the relevance of the theoretical framework guiding this study. Chapter four discusses the theoretically-driven mixed-method approach and its applicability to inform the data collection and analysis process. Chapter five examines media ownership, credibility, and reportage in Ghana. The media contribution to fighting political corruption is analyzed in chapter six while media's contribution to the problem of political corruption is examined in chapter seven. Chapter eight discusses the factors that either promote or compromise the role of the media watchdog in political corruption. Chapter nine discusses the way forward about how best to control political corruption while the final chapter presents the conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on institutions, mass media, corruption and reviews of the empirical literature on the role of the mass media in (political) corruption. Reviewing the empirical literature is useful for identifying the current gaps both to avoid re-inventing the wheel and to provide the general context within which to situate the present study (Berg, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Seen in this light, this chapter presents a critical discussion of institutions and mass media, corruption, mass media's contribution to anti-corruption efforts and mass media contribution to corruption. It finally examines the factors that impact the relationship between corruption and mass media.

2.2 Institutions & Mass Media

Institutions are enduring social organizations established to accomplish defined objectives (Harre, 1979; Giddens, 1984; Miller, 2011; Scott, 2001). Harre (1979) defines the institution as “an interlocking double-structure of persons-as-role-holders or office-bearers and the like, and of social practices involving both expressive and practical aims and outcomes” (p. 98). Harre (1979) cites British monarchy, police forces, asylums, schools, shops and post offices as examples of social institutions. Turner (1997) defines the social institution as “a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organizing relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment” (p. 6). Similarly, according to Giddens (1984), “Institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life” (p. 24). Giddens (1984) cites political, economic and legal institutions as examples of social institutions (p. 31).

Based on these definitions, institutions are merely trans-generational social complexes (forms), such as government, universities, hospitals, media organizations and business corporations, that are created to achieve specific goals based on established guidelines and rules and that can reproduce themselves. Meta institutions, such as government, regulate other institutions, including economic institutions, the education, the media and the police (Miller, 2011). According to Miller (2011), societies, and rules, roles and norms are not institutions given that (1) societies are more complex and complete social forms, and (2) rules, norms and roles are constitutive elements of institutions.

Essential properties of institutions include structure, function, sanction (Durkheim, 1964; Radcliffe-Brown, 1958; Parsons, 1968, 1982; Weber 1978), and culture (Giddens, 1984; Miller, 2011). Institutions have a structure of interdependent roles and corresponding hierarchical authority (Weber, 1978). The roles are organized into tasks with laid-down rules and procedures that govern how the tasks should be performed. Miller (2011) argues, “The constitutive roles of an institution and their relations to one another can be referred to as the *structure* of the institution” (p. 4). Institutions which embody these structures of roles and rules have histories given how they evolve. As social theorists, such as Durkheim (1964), Radcliffe-Brown (1958) and Parsons (1968, 1982) emphasize, teleological and functional characteristics indicate that institutions are created to perform specific functions intended and to accomplish pre-defined goals (ends). The purpose of the institution shapes the complex structure of formal and official roles and rules necessary for the achievement of the overall goal of the institution. The attainment of the institutional set objectives, however, depends on the interaction of actors within and outside the institution itself (Giddens, 1984; Miller, 2011).

The institutional culture embodies “the informal attitudes, values, norms and the ethos or ‘spirit’ which pervades an institution” (Miller, 2011, p. 4). Naturally, there can be two competing cultures – formal and informal – within a single organization. Formal culture consists of attitudes and norms linked to the structure of formal and official tasks and rules, and informal culture is the “unofficial” culture to which some members of the organization adhere (Miller, 2011). Institutions have [internal] sanctions comprising a system of rewards and punishment – both formal and informal – which encourage positive contributions while discouraging and deterring unhealthy conduct and behavior (Miller, 2011; Weber, 1978). The existence of institutional structures, functions, and cultures provide a general framework within which individuals often act. These institutional actors, however, have a certain degree of autonomy and discretionary powers in taking appropriate actions in situations, such as contingencies and changing social conditions, which the existing rules and policies do not cover. Customs officials, for instance, have discretionary powers to decide whom to stop and search. Role bearers have to interpret the organizational rules and regulations and act based on such interpretations (Giddens, 1976; Miller, 2011; Weber 1978).

The mass media are one of the crucial social institutions in contemporary democratic societies due to their supposedly unique role in watching over other social institutions, including government, to bring about checks and balances and ensure development (Heywood, 2012;

McAnany, 2012; McQuail, 2010; Mefalopulos, 2008; Silverblatt, 2004). These mass media – which encompass all channels of communication such as television, newspapers, the Internet, and radio for disseminating information to a broader audience – are particularly important for shaping public opinion on local, national and global issues (Harcourt, 2016; McQuail, 2010; Silverblatt, 2004).

The development of the mass media started with Johannes Gutenberg's creation of the movable type printing press which introduced newspapers and the printing of books in the 1450s (Briggs, Asa & Peter Burke, 2005; World Bank, 2009).² In 1810, Friedrich Koenig raised the printing press to a higher level by using a steam engine for the printing industry, which led to the industrialization of the print media (Briggs, Asa, & Burke, 2005; McLuhan, 1964). The 19th century saw the inventions of new forms of media, such as the radio and television. The British Broadcasting Corporation, for example, started radio and television broadcasts in 1925 and 1936 respectively in the United Kingdom (World Bank, 2009). The 20th century has witnessed the advancement of communication technologies, including the Internet and social media (like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, google+, and blogs), which have revolutionized the media landscape (World Bank, 2009).

Although the mass media are expected to be objective in their coverage of issues and events, they are often biased in their reportage (Guney, 2010). The mass media tend to take partisan positions on discussions of specific social concerns to execute their agenda (Schudson, 2011). McLuhan (1964) argues that “the medium is the message” by which he meant that each channel of communication influences differently the information that it delivers to the audience. According to Kay (1994), each medium or channel of communication has a unique way of conveying ideas to privilege particular ways of thinking while downplaying others. As an institution, the mass

² Although there were other forms of information dissemination such as messengers before the 15th century, the history of the (contemporary) mass media typically traces back to Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press (see New World Encyclopedia. (2008). *Mass media: Timeline*. Retrieved from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Mass_media&oldid=798641; Würgler, A. (2012). National and transnational news distribution 1400-1800. *European History Online*. Mainz: The Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG). Retrieved from <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/european-media/national-and-transnational-news-distribution#Terminology>).

media have their ideological leanings, norms, policies, guidelines, practices and traditions that govern the content and emphasis of the messages they deliver to their audiences (Calhoun, 2012; Habermas, 1989; Guney, 2010; Mills, 1999, 1951).

The broader institutional context – such as democratic and undemocratic political systems in which the media operate – also affects the operations of the media industry (Calhoun, 2012; Habermas, 1989; Guney, 2010; Mills, 1999, 1951). This research situates the workings of the private mass media within the larger democratic political system and socio-economic context and questions if media operations help address or worsen political corruption in the Ghanaian case.

2.3 Defining (Political) Corruption

The previous section suggested that institutions comprise complex roles, rules, the hierarchy of authority, functions, goals, culture, and sanctions to guide social actors in their conduct. Institutional corruption takes place when adherence to the legal and [ethical] institutional procedures, practices, and norms breed or systemically fuel corruption by undermining the achievement of the institutional purpose (Gray, 2013; Lessig, 2013; Newhouse, 2014). On the other hand, individual corruption typically occurs if role-bearers illegally sidestep the institutional procedures and regulations in the discharge of their mandated duties for their private interests or that of a third party (Lodge, 1999; Kpundeh, 1993; Klitgaard, 1988; Mutebi, 2008; Transparency International, 2015). This section critically reviews different definitions of corruption, such as individual, institutional and legal definitions that inform the current study.

In the political institution, the public good or government accountability is compromised if public officials fail to perform their functions based on applicable laid-down rules that require them to meet the needs of the people within the political community. Introducing this public-good approach to defining corruption, Friedrich argues,

A pattern of corruption can be said to exist whenever a power-holder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or office-holder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for induced to take actions which favor whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests. (Friedrich, 1966, p. 74).

This quotation suggests that corruption takes place if institutional agents are induced whether by cash or kind in the performance of the designated duties to achieve private interest at the expense of the collective welfare.

Corruption has been with mankind for a very long time (Abdulai, 2009; Camerer, 2009; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Klitgaard, 1988; Mafukata, 2015). In ancient Egypt, for instance, priests faced sanctions if they accepted bribes that constituted violations of the rules regarding the performance of their judicial functions (Ittner, 2009, p.19). The word “corrupt” has its origin in the Latin verb *corrumpere* translated as “to spoil,” “to damage” or “to bribe” (Ittner, 2009, p.19). The Latin word *corruptio*, the noun form of the verb “corrupt,” designates bribery and corruption, and the general state of physical or moral decadence (Ittner, 2009, p.19). Corruption is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of illicit behaviors, such as nepotism, theft, graft, bribery, fraud, kickbacks, embezzlement, extortion, pilferage, falsification of records, influence-peddling and so forth (Mutebi, 2008, Otusanya, 2011).

The appropriate universal criteria for designating specific acts as corrupt and others not are highly contested (Lodge, 1999; Heywood, 1997; Kritgaard, 1988; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Mafukata, 2015; Mutebi, 2008). It is worthwhile to analyze legal and academic definitions of corruption from both Western and African perspectives. The definitions proffered by Western academics with expertise in corruption and governance have often converged on the central theme of institutional agents’ illegal use of designated authority (power) to promote undue advantage or benefit of some sort for themselves or others. Lodge (1999), for example, defines corruption as the “misperformance or neglect of a recognized duty, or the unwarranted exercise of power, with the motive of gaining some advantage, more or less personal” (p. 57). If public officials, for example, charge for a service that they should render free, this charge amounts to corruption due to an abuse of their powers. This conception of corruption indicates that actors deliberately fail to respect the standards regulating the performance of their officially assigned duties to further their private ends or undue advantage of others. In keeping with this conception of corruption, Klitgaard (1988) argues that corruption occurs “when an individual illicitly puts personal interest above those of the people, and ideals he or she is pledged to serve” (as cited in Camerer, 2009, p. 12). In the same vein, another Western scholar defines corruption as “the misuse of public power for private and personal gain” (Palmer, 1992, p. 128). These definitions indicate that corruption occurs when people and institutions exercise power wrongfully and deliberately to advance undue private benefit.

The Stanford Encyclopedia (2011) defines corruption as any act that compromises institutional processes and purposes and further suggests that an act qualifies as institutional

corruption only when there is an institutional effect, for instance, a reduction in public trust in the institution. To determine that an entrusted power has been abused to serve private ends, one needs to establish, for example, that the ensuing act has resulted in reducing public confidence in the institution in question. This definition seems to provide a yardstick against which to judge whether an action is corrupt.

African scholars' definitions of corruption are not different from their Western counterparts (Abdulai, 2009; Camerer, 2009; Hall, 2009; Kpundeh, 1993). Sahr Kpundeh – an African scholar who is well-versed in governance and anti-corruption – for example, defines corruption as “a kind of behavior intended to produce illegal private gain at public expense” (Kpundeh, 1993, p. 1). He argues that such behavior includes “bribery, graft, gift giving in return for favors, use of official resources for personal gain, and favors from friends, clients, superiors, and others from official sources” (Kpundeh, 1993, p. 1). These definitions of corruption place emphasis on intentional deviations from the expectations and standards linked to the performance of mandatory official functions.

The above definitions emphasize the individualistic explanations of corruption and depict the individual as “a bad apple” (De Graaf, 2007; Kpunde, 1993). These definitions, therefore, fail to elucidate the systemic and institutional flaws such as defective rules and lack of enforcement of relevant regulations that may encourage the commission of corruption based on a cost-benefit analysis. In light of these definitional deficiencies, other scholars have included in definitions of institutional corruption legitimate and ethical institutional factors that promote corruption in a systemic fashion (Gray, 2013; Lessig, 2013; Newhouse, 2014).

While analyzing Congressional ethics in the 1990s in the US, Dennis F. Thompson proposed a theory of institutional corruption to illuminate systemic legislative influences that make Congress deviate from its purpose (Newhouse, 2014, p. 553). Thompson focuses attention on Congressional (i.e., institutional) conventions or practices – such as the reliance on donations to finance campaigns – that hinder the effective and efficient achievement of Congress' purpose. This focus on systemic incentive structures embedded in the institution differentiates between institutional and individual corruption. One scholar puts it this way:

Whereas private gain motivates perpetrators of individual corruption, institutional corruption is the unintended by-product of legitimate incentives such as positive media attention, legal campaign contributions, and ultimately electoral success. Whereas individual corruption consists of individuals' choices to violate their duty

to act solely on the public's behalf, institutional corruption is the institution's failure to act on the public's behalf due to its dysfunctional incentive structures. (Newhouse, 2014, p. 561).

This quotation indicates that while private benefits are the primary driving force behind individual corruption, legal procedures and processes may create incentive structures that can result in institutional corruption as an unintended consequence.

Today, scholars at Harvard University's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics have applied institutional corruption broadly to other private and public institutions, such as banks, state regulatory agencies, and pharmaceutical companies (Lessig, 2013; Newhouse, 2014). Lawrence Lessig, one of the leading researchers at this center, provides another comprehensive definition of institutional corruption:

Institutional corruption is manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal, or even currently ethical, that undermines the institution's effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including, to the extent relevant to its purpose, weakening either the public's trust in that institution or the institution's inherent trustworthiness (Lessig, 2013, p.553).

Lessig's definition encompasses all predictable and consistent acts, practices, policies, and procedures –whether legally or ethically permitted – that compromise the organization's capacity to efficiently accomplish its set goals. Lessig (2013) argues for the need to address how “systems of incentives, or economies of influence, might advance or deter a collective objective” to prevent institutional corruption (p. 554).

Similar to Lessig's (2013) conception of corruption, Gray's definition (2013) also uses this concept of institutional corruption to delineate a situation in which institutional processes, practices and norms tend to systemically promote corruption. As Gray (2013, p. 533) argues, this concept transcends “the illegal to also include unethical, and professional activities that systematically violate public trust can also be captured as a form of institutional corruption, regardless of the power of rationalizations that might accompany them.” This definition focuses attention on the often taken-for-granted institutional operations and professional routines that directly or indirectly encourage systemic corruption in an institutional setting and weaken public trust. It entails all “influences that implicitly or purposively serve to distort the independence of a professional in a position of trust” (Gray, 2013, p. 533).

Recent research indicates four categories of institutional corruption: (1) “breaches of fiduciary duty, 2) fraud or otherwise unfair commercial practices, (3) destructive firm behavior, and 4) mistake, inefficiency, or incompetence” (Newhouse, 2014, p. 553). Based on these categories, institutional corruption encompasses practices, actions, and inactions, policies and procedures whether legal or illegal and whether ethical or unethical that compromise the ability of organizations to deliver its goals. The current study explores the structure of institutional incentives (both legal and illegal) that motivate political corruption and media involvement in corruption in Ghana.

Unlike the previous conceptions of corruption that emphasize individual behavior, institutional corruption foregrounds the institutional context surrounding bad rules, norms, and practices that may motivate a commission of corruption. While expanding the conceptualization of corruption, this institutional explanation also limits the diagnosis of corruption to the institutional setting and exclude broader structural forces, including power dynamics in a society, which may lead to corruption. In this sense, corruption is merely an improper exercise of power, which may be driven by self-interest and limited accountability, for undue benefit(s).

Although the academic definition provides a broader and more flexible conceptual framework within which to navigate the current study, the legal definitions will ensure more clarity by outlining the specific acts that constitute corruption offenses as per the law, whether international or national. Inter-governmental conventions on corruption, which member states have ratified, provide international legal conceptions of corruption to facilitate and inform national and global anti-corruption efforts. The United Nations (2004) Convention on Corruption has several provisions that describe some specific acts as corruption offenses in both the public and private sectors. As Article 17 of the United Nations Convention on Corruption, for example, states the following:

Each State Party shall adopt such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offenses, when committed intentionally, the embezzlement, misappropriation or other diversion by a public official for his or her benefit or for the benefit of another person or entity, of any property, public or private funds or securities or any other thing of value entrusted to the public official by virtue of his or her position. (United Nations, 2004, p. 18)

This provision considers that the embezzlement of public funds and diversion of state resources for private purposes are acts of corruption. Articles 16 and 17 of this convention criminalize bribery. Article 16 (2) indicates the following:

Each State Party shall consider adopting such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as a criminal offence, when committed intentionally, the solicitation or acceptance by a foreign public official or an official of a public international organization, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage, for the official himself or herself or another person or entity, in order that the official act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his or her official duties. (United Nations, 2004, pp. 17-18).

Overall, these provisions define acts constituting corruption offenses and inform how member states of the United Nations could determine acts of corruption in their respective countries.

In addition to the UN Corruption Convention on Corruption, inter-governmental organizations at the continental, regional and sub-regional levels have their anti-corruption conventions. The African Union, for example, has enacted its anti-corruption convention to promote continental collaborations to bolster the fight against corruption (African Union, 2004). The Article four of the African Union (2004) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption lists a wide range of acts, including bribery and illegal appropriation of public funds and illicit enrichment, as corruption offenses. Article four (1. E), for example, define corruption as:

the diversion by a public official or any other person, for the purposes unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his or her own benefit or that of a third party, of any property belonging to the State or its agencies, to an independent agency, or to an individual, that such official has received by virtue of his or her position. (African Union, 2003, p. 7).

While these legal understandings of corruption bring specificity to the definitional debate on corruption, the legal conceptualization of corruption may provide escape routes for powerful corrupt interests to avoid prosecutions in certain geopolitical settings (Mbaku, 1999), such as Ghana. In Ghana, several anti-corruption activists demand that corruption should be re-defined as stealing to capture the contemporary pattern of the “naked theft of state funds” or resources (IMANI, 2014, p. 3). Despite this demand by citizens and civil society for redefining and widening the legal conception of corruption to reflect the new forms of corruption, including the private-sector corruption (Duodu, 2017; Mordy, 2014), successive Ghanaian governments have failed to do so.

Additionally, the 1992 Constitution concentrates prosecutorial powers in the president via the appointment of the Attorney-General, who is also a member of the executive (Republic of Ghana, 1996). This constitutional arrangement has typically resulted in Ghana's failure to retrieve stolen resources and to prosecute members of the executive who commit acts of political corruption (Asiamah, 2014; Ankomah, 2017; Asomah, 2018; Ghana Web, 2016). Thus, based on this constitutional arrangement, the Ghanaian political power dynamics, and the limited legal conception of corruption, the political elites can frustrate independent investigations and prosecutions as well as public efforts to address political corruption (Ankomah, 2017; Asomah, 2018; Ninsin, 2016).

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana also contributes to Ghanaian official corruption since specific legal provisions, such as Article 71 (Republic of Ghana, 1996), transfer state resources to politicians and their allies. This Article 71 makes mandatory the payment of salaries and exgratia for the members of the executive and legislature every four years even if they continue to serve in government in such capacities. As a result, anti-corruption activists have demanded that exgratia should be paid once, and, therefore, governmental officials who continue to serve in government should not be paid exgratia every four years until they go on retirement (Ninsin, 2016). Despite citizens' consistent demand that this Article 71 should be scrapped or reviewed, no action has been taken to date. Based on Ghanaian public opinion, this continued payment of the exgratia in its current form constitute official corruption (Ninsin, 2016). As Gibbons (1990) rightly suggests, using public opinion to define corruption may provide a more realistic and comprehensive definition than would a mere legal definition. Gradually, as the legal definition fails to capture official corruption, anti-corruption activists are calling attention to the need to tackle as well official corruption (which is sanctioned by law) (Ninsin, 2016; Oluwagbemi, 2015).

Since government officials who are supposed to play a leading role in addressing political corruption are the direct and indirect beneficiaries of various corrupt acts, they undermine Ghana's efforts to curb political corruption (Asomah, 2018; Ninsin, 2016). Contrary to the popular perception that crime is prevalent in the lower class only, Sutherland's (1949) work, which introduces the concept of "white-collar crime" in criminology, challenges this perception. His work is particularly influential in criminology because he draws attention to the dominance of crime in the upper class as well. As Sutherland (Sutherland (1949) argues, although white-collar crime – the offenses committed by powerful actors in society – poses a grave threat to the

environmental, economic, social and political health of societies, it is often ignored or treated leniently in the criminal justice system. The reason for this situation is that these powerful offenders can use their privileged positions in society to their advantage in securing less severe sentencing or punishment (Friedrichs, 2007; Geis, 2007; Shover & Wright, 2001; Sutherland, 1949). Sutherland's (1949) concept of white-collar crime explains the successive Ghanaian governments' weak responses to political corruption in the country. Ghana has both generic and specific legal definitions of corruption. The 1992 Constitution provides a generic definition of corruption as exemplified in Article 218 (Sections A and E), which provides this description: "corruption, abuse of power and unfair treatment of any person by a public officer in the exercise of his official duties" (Republic of Ghana, 1996, p. 107). The Criminal Offenses Act 1960, however, provides a more comprehensive catalog of acts that constitute corruption offenses in the eye of the law (Government of Ghana, 1960). Section 252 (1) of this Act (p. 88), for example, states that a person committing "a misdemeanor"

offers to accept, a valuable consideration, under pretense or color of having unduly influenced, or of agreeing or being able so to influence, any other person in respect of functions as a public officer or juror, commits a misdemeanor. (Government of Ghana, 1960, p. 88).

This excerpt shows that soliciting or offering either cash or kind to influence public officers in the conduct of their official duties is a crime. Despite such definitions being enshrined in Ghanaian law, the sanctions for committing corruption offences are slight. Because these misdemeanors carry less punishment than felonies, their deterrence effect is negligible. As Section 239 of the *Criminal Offenses Act* confirms that corruption offenses are considered to be misdemeanors, not felonies:

1) A public officer or juror who commits corruption, or willful oppression, or extortion, in respect of the duties of the office, commits a misdemeanor. 2) A person who corrupts any other person in respect of duty as a public officer or juror commits a misdemeanor. (Government of Ghana, 1960, p. 86).

Reclassifying corruption offenses as felonies might help address corruption in Ghana. Although Ghana categorizes corruption as a misdemeanor that is subject to a maximum imprisonment term of 25 years (Section 296(5)³ of the Criminal and Other Offences Act 30), anti-corruption analysts

³ http://laws.ghanalegal.com/acts/id/20/section/296/General_Rules_For_Punishment

argue that corruption should be categorized as a felony (Duodu, 2017). Re-categorizing corruption as a felony rather than a misdemeanor may, however, have a little deterring effect if the government fails to take other anti-corruption measures. These additional measures that need to be pursued may include reducing monopoly and discretionary powers, and creating a capable surveillance system to detect acts of corruption, (Clarke, 2012; Klitgaard, 1988; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013b).

Aside from the definitions discussed, corruption may be described as “grand” or “petty” depending on the institutional ranks of the perpetrators and the extent of the corrupt act in question. Petty corruption involves lower-level officers or staff who may collect bribes to top up their low incomes to help them survive, unlike grand corruption, which is typically motivated by greed (Lodge 1999; Doig & Theobald, 2000; Otusanya, 2011; Transparency International, 2015). Bribes are facilitating offers that usually take the form of money to ensure a provision of legitimate or illegitimate services (Lodge 1999; Doig & Theobald, 2000; Otusanya, 2011; Transparency International, 2015). An example of a bribe is helping a client avoid sanctions for traffic violations. While petty corruption involves lower ranks of officials, grand corruption encompasses corrupt acts committed by the middle and upper ranks of officials. Political corruption is a typical form of grand corruption (Camerer, 2009; Mafukata, 2015; Mutebi, 2008).

Mutebi (2008, p. 148) defines political corruption as “the misuse of power by government officials for illegitimate private gain.” Political corruption then points to an improper exercise of the power to advance personal interests by government officials both elected and appointed. Like Mutebi, Camerer (2009) argues that political corruption occurs when “politicians or functionaries use their privileged access to resources illegitimately to benefit themselves or others” (p. 18). Political corruption thus relates to the unauthorized use of state resources for private interests by politicians or top government officials. Examples of political corruption include accepting money or other rewards for awarding contracts in the public procurement process, issuing state licenses and diverting public resources for personal use. Other forms of political corruption include nepotism, overpricing deals, embezzlement, extracting rents from multinational companies and illegally transferring money from public accounts to private accounts (Camerer, 2009; Lowenstein, 2013; Gray, 2015).

In sum, the universal definition of [political] corruption offenses is hard to come by due to contextual variations in legal and socio-cultural understandings. The academic definition of

corruption is generic and may be open to several competing interpretations as to what constitutes an abuse of power. Although legal definitions focus on specific acts that constitute corruption offenses to ensure clarity, they may also differ from one place to the other. It is, therefore, important for researchers working in the sociology of corruption to conceptualize corruption as intended in their specific studies. For this reason, political corruption in this dissertation, encompasses any form of illegal use of power per the Constitution of Ghana to serve private interests by members of the executive arm of government and their allies in the execution of state social intervention schemes in the country.

Despite white collar crime like political corruption costing society more harm than both the conventional and street crime, it is less punished because the offenders often use their social connections, and the political and economic power to escape harsher punishment (Friedrichs, 2007; Geis, 2007; Shover & Wright, 2001; Sutherland, 1949). Unsurprisingly, despite the harms that Ghanaian political corruption has caused to environmental security (Teschner, 2012), economic growth, political stability and the wellbeing of the ordinary Ghanaians, political commitment to effective anti-corruption efforts is extremely limited (Asomah, 2018; Abdulai, 2009; Ninsin, 2016). Following Sutherland's (1949) construct of white-collar crime, the researcher takes the view that political corruption, which is one form of white-collar crime, has grave consequences for society and should galvanize all stakeholders, particularly, the civil society groups and private mass media to speak to (political) power and help address this problem.

2.4 Mass Media Contribution to Anti-Corruption Efforts

The global anti-corruption movement that gathered momentum from the early 1980s involved influential actors, including the World Bank, the donor community, the global civil society, of which Transparency International is the most prominent, and governmental bodies such as the United Nations. This anti-corruption campaign focused on championing adherence to high ethical and moral standards in both state government and corporate affairs by helping to raise awareness about the essence of integrity, good governance, accountability and transparency in both personal and social life. The anti-corruption movement is part of the ethical globalization or moral explanation to make the world a better place (Dell, 2006; Sampson, 2005). The post-Cold War emphasis on democracy, transparency, and accountability focused on the need to address the problem of corruption (Dell, 2006). The second explanation for the upsurge in the anti-corruption campaign is the system rationality (i.e., efficiency argument), which holds that addressing

corruption will create efficient market economies and state administration and development for all (Sampson, 2005).

As expected, interest in the watchdog role of the mass media as a means of curbing corruption also increased in the late 1980s, particularly among the international development partners, to ensure that powerful interests cannot divert development aid into their private bank accounts at the expense of the vulnerable masses (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Brunetti, & Weder, 2003; Phiri, 2008; Sampson, 2010; Staphenurst & O'Brien, 2000). This interest has contributed to the pressure and support for media to be free, particularly from state control, as a way to help tackle the corruption that has mainly engulfed most developing countries (Transparency International, 2015; Wrong, 2009).

Both traditional mass media institutions (including print and electronic) and, more recently, social media platforms have helped fight corruption (Arnold & Lal, 2012). Current mainstream and social media platforms reinforce each other in anti-corruption struggles (Arnold & Lal, 2012). For example, Arnold and Lal (2012) observed that mainstream media bring corruption-related stories from social media platforms to a broader audience. On the other hand, mainstream mass media news on corruption also provokes discussions on social media platforms and helps spark online anti-corruption movements.

Based on watchdog theory, the mass media contribute to fighting corruption in different ways, such as building anti-corruption culture through education and awareness creation and providing a platform for anti-corruption discourse. The media also unmask corruption through investigative journalism, mobilize for the anti-corruption agenda, monitor government and mobilize public support for constitutional and institutional reforms (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Staphenurst & O'Brien, 2000). Phiri (2008), for instance, shows that the mass media undertake investigations and expose corrupt officials and use such exposures to spark public pressure for accountability, prompt relevant authorities to initiate investigations and demand legal and institutional reforms.

Empirical evidence demonstrates the watchdog functions of the mass media in fighting corruption in both developing and developed countries. In the case of developing countries, some researchers have observed that the mass media play a constructive role in fighting corruption (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Rajak, 2014). In the Philippines, for example, Rajak (2014) documents how the mass media contribute to fighting corruption in different ways, including

exposing corruption, pressurizing government for anti-corruption reforms and building anti-corruption culture. In Kenya, for instance, Jarso (2010) argues that the mass media help to address corruption through creating awareness, conducting investigative journalism to unmask corruption scandals and demanding government accountability and anti-corruption reforms.

In the context of developed countries, Stapenhurst and O'Brien's (2000) classic work provides compelling evidence of the role of mass media in fighting corruption in different countries, such as Canada, the US and Italy. Stapenhurst and O'Brien (2000) argue that mass media use a variety of anti-corruption approaches, such as exposing corruption through investigative journalism, shaping public opinion against corruption and demanding institutional reforms to address the problem. Former US president Richard Nixon had to resign because of public pressure for impeachment following the exposure of his involvement with the bugging of the Democratic National Committee offices at the Watergate Hotel in 1972 (Protess, Cook, Dappled, Ettema, Gordon, Leff, & Miller, 1991).

Investigative journalism is one of the mass media's most powerful weapon to expose corruption and demand the necessary reforms. In the case of developed countries, Protess et al. (1991) provide an excellent in-depth analysis of the role of investigative journalism in addressing corruption in the US. These researchers observed that investigative journalism in the US context achieves three types of policy outcomes: "deliberative," "individualistic" and "substantive." The deliberative outcome is one in which the investigative findings prompt relevant authorities to discuss the problem and the way forward. The individualistic outcome occurs when the individual offenders get punished as the law demands. The substantive outcome takes place when findings lead to important reforms in legal, institutional, procedural and operational frameworks.

In the case of developing countries, the picture looks similar, as research evidence demonstrates the power of investigative journalism in exposing cases of corruption and creating pressure for anti-corruption reforms (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Gray, 2015; Jarso, 2010; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014). In the African context, for instance, the mass media in Kenya uncovered the infamous Golden Affair scandal in which Goldenberg International wrongly received compensations for a faked gold and diamond jewelry export contract. This scandal, involving a collaboration between wealthy business owners and powerful government officials, cost Kenya about 850 million US dollars (Jarso, 2010, p. 60). If it had not been for the critical watchdog role

of the private commercial media, this high-profile corruption case would likely have been covered up by the government.

Both qualitative and quantitative evidence support the watchdog functions of the media in fighting corruption (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Camaj, 2012; Freille, Haque & Kneller, 2007; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). Using a quantitative approach, for instance, Camaj (2012) observes that the media constitute an important check on corruption even after controlling for intervening variables, including horizontal structures of state accountability. Similarly, employing a qualitative approach, Arnold & Lal (2012) use empirical examples from India and the Philippines to illustrate the capacity of the media to check corruption through investigative journalism.

The outcomes of the media's watchdog role fall into tangible and intangible categories (Stapenhurst, 2000). The intangible category relates to invisible results such as an increased sense of accountability and attitudinal changes among public officials to curb corruption. The tangible component, in contrast, involves directly observable outcomes of the watchdog role of the media in fighting corruption. This visible component includes the launching of an investigation into the reported acts of corruption by relevant authorities, the scrapping of a law or policy breeding corruption, the setting up of a commission of inquiry, the resignation of an offending person or party and the imposition of sanctions.

In conclusion, this section has examined ways in which the media contribute to the fight against corruption and the possible empirical outcomes of the media's watchdog functions. The empirical literature shows that the mass media contribute to addressing corruption in both developed and developing countries that are practicing democratic constitutional rule. Meanwhile, no in-depth study has examined how the media may or may not contribute to the fight against political corruption in Ghana since the beginning of the fourth republic in 1992 and the repeal of the criminal libel law in 2001, in particular. Focusing on the Ghanaian case, this dissertation contributes to the existing literature on the anti-corruption efforts of the private media. Ghana is an important case for several reasons: since 1992, successive Ghanaian governments have consistently claimed to tackle political corruption; the mass media has a constitutional mandate to ensure transparency and accountability; the mass media industry in the country has grown considerably in the last 30 years; and Ghana is considered to be a model of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.5 Mass Media Contribution to Corruption

Critical theory suggests that mass media are a tool for influential people and corporations to advance their parochial interests at the expense of the public good (Ansah, 1991; Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Habermas, 1989; Dahlgren & Sparks, 1995; Mills, 1951, 1956). In this sense, the mass media contribute to corruption by becoming directly or indirectly involved in acts of corruption, by serving as an accomplice in acts of corruption or by not helping fight corruption. The empirical literature provides support for this theoretical stance in demonstrating that the mass media contribute to corruption by, for example, acting as the mouthpiece of people and organizations deeply involved in corruption (Sowunmi, Raufu, Oketokun, Salako, & Usifoh, 2010; Srivastava, 2016). In other documented cases, influential people and organizations buy off the mass media institutions to advance their parochial interests (Besley & Prat, 2006; Sowunmi et al., 2010; McMillan & Zoido, 2004; Vaidya, 2005). McMillan and Zoido (2004), for example, document a classic case of media corruption in which media outlets received bribes to do the bidding of President Alberto Fujimori during his rule in Peru.

The involvement of the mass media in concealing instances of corruption varies depending on the context. In the African context, some mass media outlets cover up corruption scandals to obtain their share of the proceeds from corrupt deals (Jarso, 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). In Nigeria, for instance, empirical evidence points to a “journalistic protocol” in which media outlets that receive payoffs from powerful people in the country consciously fail to publish corruption cases involving their so-called “clients” (Sowunmi et al., 2010). This research evidence indicates that some mass media outlets benefit from actors directly involved in corrupt deals. This behavior of the mass media compromises its watchdog role in fighting corruption. In the case of authoritarian political settings such as China, Li (2013) reports institutional rent-seeking, in which media houses receive money for blackmailing or “propaganda sponsorship.” In other instances, if the journalists discover the wrongdoing of a company or individual, the media will demand hush money to stop publishing the scandalizing story (Li, 2013).

The media cover-up of corruption does not occur only in non-democratic countries like China; it also takes place in democratic political contexts. In India, Srivastava (2016) reports that corruption within the press undermines its watchdog role. Corruption also occurs when private media outlets tied to political parties produce biased and inaccurate information to favor the party they support (Coronel, 2008; Jarso, 2010). When biased and unbalanced media reportage provides

cover-ups for corruption scandals within political parties and government, the fight against corruption is impeded.

Finally, research evidence indicates that powerful actors, including corrupt government officials, manipulate the mass media to serve their own interests through the awarding of advertising contracts (Besley & Prat, 2006; Colonel, 2008; Haque, 2012). The media's lack of independence provides an avenue for those with powerful interests to exert control over the media to advance their interests by threatening to withdraw their financial and material support. Despite legal provisions that guarantee the freedom of the media in democratic rule the mass media are not immune to manipulation by self-interested powerful people and entities that serve private interests.

In Ghana, previous research has focused on the watchdog role of the media, particularly in protecting and deepening democratic values and culture in the country's fourth republic (Abdulai, 2009; Aikins, 2013; Arthur, 2010; Obeng-Odoom, 2014; Osei-Tutu, Badu, & Manu, 2009). While this body of literature extends knowledge of the watchdog role of the mass media, it does not provide a balanced account of how private media outlets might add to the problem of corruption in Ghana. Asah-Asante and Brako (2014), for example, use media reports and agenda-setting theory to analyze the watchdog role of private mass media in exposing selected cases of public sector corruption. Although this study updates the substantive knowledge of the constructive role of the mass media in the fight against corruption in Ghana, it fails to examine how the media may also contribute to the problem of political corruption in the country.

To date, no specific in-depth empirical study has focused on investigating the extent to which the private commercial mass media may have compromised the performance of their constitutionally mandated watchdog functions despite the new-found freedoms in the country's fourth democratic experimentation. This gap in the existing literature has stimulated this researcher's interest in investigating the Ghanaian case to find out if the private commercial media outlets in Ghana contribute to political corruption. This current study draws on a comprehensive theoretical framework and both primary and secondary data to provide a nuanced and in-depth investigation into whether the private commercial media constructively contribute to the fight against political corruption insight. The above research evidence indicates that media corruption and propaganda peddling undermine the watchdog role of the private mass media in ensuring government accountability and ultimately contributing to controlling political corruption in both democratic and authoritarian political contexts. To what extent are the private mass media

compromised or disabled in performing their watchdog functions against political corruption in Ghana? This question has partly stimulated the researcher's interest to investigate the Ghanaian case to find out whether or not the mass media in Ghana contribute to the problem of political corruption.

2.6 Factors Influencing Mass Media's Watchdog Role

The interaction of several factors, both structural (external) and non-structural (internal), shape the watchdog role of the private commercial media. These factors fall into two categories:

(1) those that are conducive to media watchdogging, and (2) those that are hostile to media watchdogging. The favorable factors include the freedom of expression, the freedom and independence of the mass media, access to information, and the safety of media personnel, especially investigative journalists (Haque, 2012; Omojola, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; Vishwavidhyalaya & Bhopal, 2014). For the mass media fighting corruption in some countries, the absence of these conditions can make this work life-threatening.

In developing countries, in particular, the freedom and independence of the media are typically limited due to powerful anti-corruption forces, such as hostile government attitudes, often involving members of the executive arm, towards anti-corruption reporting (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017). Jarso (2010) reports that the government of Kenya has unjustifiably cracked down on media houses, including Standard newspaper and KTN television station, both of which have been critical of the ruling government. In Bahrain, the authorities have banned an independent media outlet, *Al-Wasat*, from publishing indefinitely without providing any justification for the ban (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017).

In these media-unfriendly settings, journalists may experience the threat of death, assault, unwarranted criminal prosecutions and imprisonment without trial, all of which have been commonly documented in some countries, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Venezuela (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2012, 2017). In Philippines and Mexico, for example, investigative journalists are often murdered (Coronel, 2008). In India, Srivastava (2016) observes that some journalists conducting investigative journalism and exposing corruption have been murdered while others have been reported missing following their exposure of corruption cases. The safety of media personnel is a key factor in determining their involvement in anti-corruption efforts.

Other factors that affect media's anti-corruption efforts include media integrity, media accountability and quality of media training, particularly investigative journalistic skills (Colonel, 2008; Haque, 2012; Rajak, 2014). For example, unsurprisingly, in countries where journalists have limited investigative skills, the media is less likely to address corruption (Jarso, 2010; Stapenhurst, 2000). In sub-Saharan Africa, another critical determinant of the watchdog role of the media is regionalism and ethnicity. In Nigeria, the media have divided along South-North lines in reporting corruption (Jibo, 2003). Media outlets sympathetic to the North, for instance, are highly unlikely to report corruption scandals involving business people and politicians from the North.

Aside from regionalism and ethnicity and the threats confronting anti-corruption journalism due to lack of media freedom and safety, factors that can motivate the media, particularly if is commercial, to become corrupt are profit motives and poor working conditions. Other factors include the media's affiliation to a political party or ruling government, ownership pressure and political interference to cover up corruption scandals through financial inducement (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Haque, 2012; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Rajak 2014). While these factors impede the constructive role of the media, financial constraints confronting some private media houses and low salaries of journalists markedly contribute to the media's vulnerability to soliciting and accepting bribes from politicians and business owners to do their bidding (Colonel, 2008; Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010). In the African context, these factors have been observed to shape media corruption in Kenya (Jarso, 2010), Nigeria (Jibo, 2003; Omojola, 2010; Sowunmi et al., 2010) and Uganda (Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011).

Additionally, the lack of media freedom and safety do not provide a favorable climate for bold, honest and self-motivated anti-corruption journalists to operate. Instead, they are often assaulted, jailed, abducted or murdered (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017). In the case of Ghana, no recent study has investigated factors that negatively impact the performance of the watchdog functions of the private mass media. The current research contributes to filling this void in the literature by updating and improving our substantive knowledge about the factors that shape the role of the mass media in political corruption.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the conceptual definitions of institutions, the mass media and [political] corruption and the empirical literature on mass media. The empirical evidence on media's relationship to corruption is mixed. On the one hand, the mass media are one of the critical

resources for fighting corruption through creating awareness, monitoring government, unmasking corruption, putting corruption on government's agenda and mobilizing public support for constitutional and institutional reforms. The key factors that permit the mass media's anti-corruption efforts include the freedom of speech, the freedom and independence of the press, access to information, the rule of law and the safety of anti-corruption media personnel.

On the other hand, the mass media are said to contribute to corruption by functioning as propagandists and manipulative instruments of the network of powerful entities and individuals. The factors that undermine the watchdog role of the media include profit motives of the commercial mass media and ownership and political (government) pressures. Other factors include harsh economic conditions, including poor working conditions such as meager salaries for media personnel. These factors constitute a barrier to mass media's involvement in anti-corruption efforts.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES

3.1 Introduction

Political philosophers have debated about the type of government arrangements that can best ensure an orderly society while serving the needs of the people in the best possible manner. This debate has produced three central, fundamental political systems – such as authoritarian and liberal – that have ultimately shaped press theories about the organization, role, and purpose and functions of the media (Hesmodnhalgh & Toynbee, 2011; Karppinen, 2013; Phelann & Dahlberg, 2011). In the authoritarian state, the need to protect the existing political power structures to promote supposedly national cohesion and solidarity takes precedence over individual freedoms and autonomy. Under the authoritarian political system, the government strictly controls the mass media, and any media criticism of the regime seen to compromise the legitimacy of the government can lead to fines, imprisonment or death (Kavka, 1983; Llody & Sreedhar, 2012; Ritzer, 2012). The liberal political system, in contrast, promotes civil and political rights, including media rights and freedoms (Heywood, 2012; Llody & Sreedhar, 2012). In the liberal political system, theoretically, the media mostly operate freely to hold power holders accountable, and it is assumed that the government can serve the citizens better if the press and the people are empowered to criticize and influence government policies.

This chapter discusses democratic theory, Giddens' theory of structuration and significant press theories, such as authoritarian, liberal, social responsibility, developmental, democratic participant and the public sphere. It argues that the different press theories predominantly focus on structural factors based on the nature of the political system without giving much attention to how structural and agency elements may interact and shape media systems in practice. The chapter finally lays out the theoretical framework informing the current study by discussing the relevance of theories of democracy, structuration, the media watchdog and the public sphere.

3.2. Democratic Theory

Democracy comes from the Greek words *demos* (the people) and *Kratos* (the rule), which collectively mean government by the people (Hagen, 1992, p. 16). Democratic theory draws attention to the need for citizens to exercise control over their leadership and to advance government accountability. As Dahl (1956, p. 3) argues, "Democratic theory is concerned with processes by which citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders." Dahl's

definition captures political thoughts that focus on how the structures within political systems provide the citizenry with opportunities and platforms to hold leadership accountable. Similarly, according to Laurence (2015, p. 1), “Democratic theory is an established subfield of political theory that is primarily concerned with examining the definition and meaning of the concept of democracy, as well as the moral foundations, obligations, challenges, and overall desirability of democratic governance.” Democratic theory thus encompasses all political discourses seeking to enhance the conceptual understanding, contested purpose, design, implementation and entrenchment of democratic governance.

Democratic theory has different dimensions or emphases, including liberal democracy, participatory democracy, social democracy and dialogue (or critical) democracy. Social democratic theory emphasizes the need for the state to redistribute national resource wealth by implementing economic and social intervention programs to ensure social justice (Heywood, 2012; Jackson, 2008; McChesney, 2000; Miller, 1998). On the other hand, participatory democracy implies a more inclusive involvement of the citizenry in political decision-making processes than does traditional representative democracy (Baiocchi, 2005; Fishkin, 2011; Elster, 1998). Additionally, liberal democracy emphasizes the separation of powers, constitutional supremacy, human and political freedoms, an independent judiciary, transparency and accountability, the rule of law and free and fair multi-party elections based on universal adult suffrage (Adams, 2001; Heywood, 2012; Hyland, 1995; Venter, 2012). This variant of democratic theory ensures that majority powers are constitutionally limited to protect minority rights in particular and the rights of individuals and the social collectivity in general.

Despite different versions of democratic theory, there seems to be a general agreement that democracy is “some form of government or process of collective self-rule” (Laurence, 2015, p. 1). Common to all the different emphases of democratic theory is the commitment to advancing representative democracy. Liberal democracy appears to provide the foundation for other variants of democratic theory to build on, with the view to offering additional measures for addressing the bottlenecks of liberal representative democracy. In critiquing liberal democracy, McChesney (2000, p. 5), for example, envisions social democracy as providing mechanisms for “reducing social inequality and establishing a media system that serves the entire population and promotes democratic rule.” Deliberative or dialogue democracy, on the other hand, emphasizes the use of discussion to resolve conflicts or differences in opinion in a non-partisan and selfless manner and

to build consensus on national issues in the best interests of the collectivity (Elster, 1998; Gutmann & Thompson 2004).

These different perspectives of the democratic theory have informed this research. Venter (2012) argues that all democracies – despite their differences – involve a commitment to advancing human and political freedoms, government accountability and the rule of law and social justice, and the ability of citizens to choose their representatives in free and fair multi-party elections. These fundamental democratic aspirations may have informed Ghana's transition from military dictatorship to democratic rule in 1992. The democratic governance in Ghana is likely to encompass a blend of the different views of democratic theory, particularly the liberal component.

Liberal political theory, which is premised on liberty and equality, espouses, for instance, civil and political rights to safeguard individual freedoms against infringement by government, private entities and individuals (Heywood, 2012; Venter, 2012; Wolin, 2004). Civil rights include the right to life and protection from all forms of discrimination regardless of gender, age, disability, religion, party affiliation or ethnicity. These civil rights also include a guarantee of freedom of association, speech, religion, press, thought and movement (Altman, n.d.; United Nations, 1996; Venter, 2012). Political rights, however, emphasize among others the right to seek redress or remedy, the right to a fair trial, and the right to vote or to participate in public life, alongside press freedom and free speech (Altman, n.d.; United Nations, 1996). Both civil and political rights protect human and political freedoms and empower citizens to be active participants in public life in an atmosphere devoid of repression, coercion or discrimination. These rights and liberties pave the way for the effective functioning of the mass media as a watchdog over government officials without fear of a political crackdown.

In sum, a democratic political system is assumed to provide a conducive environment for plural and critical journalistic inquiries as part of the overall democratic structures for promoting government accountability (Colonel, 2008). For this assumption to hold, conditions that must prevail include (1) constitutional recognition of the media as a fourth estate, (2) legal protections guaranteeing the independence and freedom of the press in theory and practice, (3) a substantial political commitment to advancing transparency and accountability, and (4) a firm determination to safeguard civil and political liberties, including freedom of expression, tolerance for dissenting voices and access to information. These assumptions point to the structural factors that can shape the role of the mass media in Ghana.

3.3 Media Theories

This section discusses relevant media theories, such as authoritarian theory, liberal theory, social responsibility theory, development theory, democratic participant theory and the public sphere theory.

3.3.1 Authoritarian Theory

This theory originated with the political philosophy of Plato (407-327 B.C), who assumed that only a few wise men can guarantee the safety and interests of the state (Raza, 2012). The theory suggests that truth is a preserve of this select few wise men, particularly those who wield power in society. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) argue that since the “truth was thought to be centered near the center of power,” “the press ... functioned from the top down” (p. 2). Similarly, given human beings’ natural tendency to compete for power and resources even to the detriment of fellow human beings, Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher (1588-1679), proposed an absolute monarch to safeguard social order. Hobbes argued that life is insecure without strict enforcement of laws to regulate human behavior and prevent violent death because people are willing to use violent means to achieve their goals in the state of nature (Kavka, 1983; Llody & Sreedhar, 2012; Ritzer, 2012). Hobbes prescribed a strong government to keep people in check and ensure an orderly society to prevent the “war of all against all” that characterizes the state of nature (Kavka, 1983; Llody & Sreedhar, 2012; Ritzer, 2012).

Consistent with this political thinking, the authoritarian theory of the press explains media systems that operate under strict government regulations that hardly permit media criticism of the authoritarian regime. Instead, the theory suggests that the media should support the policies and actions of the state and its agencies to protect the existing social order and ensure national solidarity and unity (Dzisah, 2008; Hassan, 2018; Piontek, 2016; Siebert et al., 1963). Italy and Germany modeled media systems after authoritarian theory before the Second World War under the respective rulers of Hitler and Mussolini (Hassan, 2018).

Authoritarian regimes in Europe exhibited strong control of the press. An example of such control of the press can be seen in the English monarchies of the 15th and 16th centuries, who controlled the media through censorship and strict licensing regime following Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century (Raza. 2012, Dzisa, 2008; Piontek, 2016). As the Renaissance continued to flourish, the English monarchs assumed full control of the press and decided which information to release to the public. The monarch granted private media the

privilege to operate, and they, in addition to the state-owned media, were required to support the policies of the monarchy (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini & Fung, 2002). The authoritarian conception of the press continued to dominate as “publishing came under the prerogative and censorship powers of the monarch and church” in most European countries (Hassan, 2018, p. 1). The church and the state controlled the media since they considered the invention of the press as a potential challenge to their power and monopoly over knowledge (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini & Fung, 2002). Today, several governments whether democratic or undemocratic may devise subtle or open means to control the media (Hassan, 2018; Raza, 2012). The lack of the right to information law is one way that democratic governments may restrict media access to information that does not pose any security threat to the state.

Under the authoritarian political system, private mass media can operate within the strict regulatory regime in addition to the state-owned media. However, private media outlets that are critical of government can lose their licenses and be imprisoned in the worse scenario (Hatchen, 1981; Piontek, 2016; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963). In the authoritarian state, the printing press is mostly in private hands while the government owns the broadcasting segment (Raza, 2012). Authoritarian theory provides the foundations for rationalizing some governments’ control over the press (Siebert et al., 1963). The way the authoritarian government exercises control over the people is similar to the way it controls the media (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini & Fung, 2002; Raza, 2012). Media censorship and repressive laws are seen as legitimate to enable the state to control and regulate the media fully in the authoritarian political system. The press cannot produce critical publications in the name of searching for the truth.

The authoritarian theory of the media is premised on two major assumptions about the primary aim and functions of the mass media in society. First, it assumes that the principal objective of the mass media system is perpetuate the existing social order by supporting the regime’s success in moving the country forward (Hatchen, 1981; Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini & Fung, 2002; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963). It provides the masses with no opportunity to express their views freely via the mass media since the people are not considered competent enough to offer critical political decisions to the leadership of the state.

Second, authoritarian theory assumes that mass media are expected to act as an educator and be the propagandist wing of government. The theory considers the mass media an instrument of social control, which the state is required to regulate (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini &

Fung, 2002). The Burmese media, for instance, operated in an authoritarian political system until 2011 when the country began easing censorship regulations in a move towards a democratic path (Karlekar, 2006). The Burmese authoritarian media system supported the military junta. Critical journalists, whose reports were seen as an attack on the military junta, received different forms of punishment including imprisonment. Today, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran are examples of countries practicing the authoritarian media system (Ying, Hui, Sek, Loh, & Huijie, n.d.).

Authoritarian theory is considered to have both strengths and weaknesses. Regarding its strengths, this theory suggests that an authoritarian regime can prevent some media from acting irresponsibly and that it can also ensure national cohesion against ethnic and tribal sentiments, which can lead to chaos and disorder. On the other hand, one of the major limitations of this theory is that the ruling elites often use the mass media to execute their selfish agenda. A second limitation is that the freedom of expression and access to information by less powerful people are restricted. In some democratic countries, the authoritarian theory of the press may be applied subtly, such as limiting access to information that poses no security threat to the state (Hassan, 2018; Raza, 2012). In the case of Ghana, the right to information bill has still not been passed into law (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2018). Successive governments' failure to pass this bill can be assumed to limit the power of the media to ensure transparency and accountability, which the political authorities consider a threat to their power base. While explicit government controls of the media may not be present in Ghana, which has committed itself to constitutional democracy, this research investigates any subtle form of authoritarian tendencies that restrict media independence and freedoms. Although authoritarian theory illuminates the role of structural factors in dictating media systems in dictatorial political systems, it fails to account for the possible role of actors in shaping both the media and the political systems in practice. It also fails to explain how the economic arrangements may also influence media systems (Ostini & Fung, 2002). These limitations weaken the explanatory power of this theory to adequately account for dynamic mass media systems in contemporary societies.

3.3.2 Liberal Theory

Liberal theory traces its philosophical and political foundations to liberal thinkers, including John Milton, Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill. These thinkers argued that government is a form of a consensual arrangement between the ruler and the ruled to maintain social order and ensure the collective wellbeing of the citizens

within the political community (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d.; Llody & Sreedhar, 2012; Ritzer, 2012). Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) claimed that the power to govern or legislate resides in the sovereign people, not in any divine authority to do so. In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau made a case for the establishment of a government that reflects the general will of the people in a political community (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d.; Rousseau, 1762). By general will, Rousseau suggested that the exercise of sovereign power should benefit the citizenry.

While there may be unsettled questions about the specificity of the general will and who determines it, liberal theory suggests that allowing diversity of opinions via independent and free media can deepen the debate on public interests and the best approach to achieve them. The early liberal theorists believed that freeing individuals from the restrictions that the church and the state imposed on them would provoke critical debate on the best way to govern and to serve the people well. As John Milton argued in 1644, “In a fair debate good and truthful arguments will always win out over lies and deceit...a new and better social order could be forged using public debate” (as cited in Hassan, 2018, p. 3). Extending the liberal argument for press freedom and free speech in America, John Stuart Mill explained the following:

The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation, those who dissent from the opinion, even more than withholding it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error. (As cited in Hassan, 2018, p. 4).

Similar to Mill’s belief in public debate to bring about human progress, Thomas Jefferson also argued that public debate via the mass media could create and maintain better social order:

The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right, and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter. (Jefferson, 1787; as cited in Besley & Prat, 2006, p. 720).

The liberal press theory is thus patterned on liberal political philosophy that espouses individual freedoms and rights to decide and shape government political agenda. This theory recognizes that the sovereign power derives from the people, which suggests that the people should be free to criticize the government and make input into public policies and decisions to serve their needs.

Liberal theory suggests that the mass media should have the freedom and independence to entertain, inform, discover the truth and check the excesses of government or powerful interests (Hassan, 2018; Hatchen, 1992; Raza, 2012; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963). It also emphasizes that people have natural rights, one of which is the right to search for the truth. Hence, this theory implies that potential obstacles (such as the lack of freedom of expression) should be removed in individuals' pursuit of the truth. The emerging democratic ideal during the late seventeenth century provided a catalyst for the liberal press movement, which argued for press autonomy from the church and state control to allow people to search for the truth (Hassan, 2018; Piontek, 2016; Raza, 2012; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963).

England is known to have initiated the struggle for press freedom to enable people to express their opinion on critical national concerns and to hold government accountable. English parliamentarians introduced a bill in 1649 that called for press freedom. According to this bill, "If a government wants to act justly and by the constitutional principles, then it will have to be necessary for it to hear all voices and all opinions. But this is only possible if there is press freedom" (as cited in Kunczik, 1988, p. 16). This bill emphasizes the potentially crucial role that mass media can play in demanding government accountability in modern democratic societies. Liberal theory, therefore, emphasizes the importance of a free and independent press to act as a sturdy watchdog body to check misuse of power in democratic societies.

While authoritarian theory assumes that truth is a preserve of a select few powerful people, liberal theory emphasizes that individuals can determine the truth and that they have inalienable right to pursue the truth (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini & Fung, 2002; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963). Liberal theory assumes that human beings are sufficiently creative and rational to direct and lead their affairs and that they can differentiate between "truth and falsehood, between a better and worse alternative" to make informed choices in the face of conflicting evidence (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963, p. 3). In this way, liberal theory follows the thinking of the Enlightenment and liberal political philosophy that views human beings as rational and naturally capable of seeking the truth and making independent decisions. Seen in this light, liberal press theory emphasizes individual liberties and suggests that individuals have the innate capacity to think and make their own independent political choices in democratic societies (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Ostini & Fung, 2002; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963).

By considering individuals as rational and competent actors, liberal theory emphasizes that necessary conditions, such as the freedom and independence of the press as well as freedom of expression, should be created to allow the search for the truth in society. This search for the truth will encourage different viewpoints considered vital in growing democratic societies. For liberal thinkers, including Edmund Burke, the mass media are an integral part of a democratic government responsible for checking the excesses of political power (Dzisah, 2008; Piontek, 2016; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963).

To ensure press freedom and autonomy from government control and to effectively play the watchdog role, liberal thinker, such as Milton and Mills, proposed commercialization (private ownership) of the mass media (Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963). Curran and Gurevitch (2005) suggests that the privatization of the media may ensure the media's independence from state control. This commercialization aims at making the mass media institutions free and autonomous to act as an active watchdog body in society. The libertarian's emphasis on the market, has, however, commoditized the media to the point where the profitability of media organizations matters more than public interests (Akhavan-Majid & Wolf, 1991; Haque, 2012; Hassan, 2018; Ostini & Fung, 2002).

In conclusion, liberal theory encourages media competition and freedom to provide information without censorship and to advance government accountability. Media organizations in Western countries, for example, the US and the United Kingdom, typically operate freely without government censorship and can criticize the government without fear of reprisal (Karlekar, 2006; Hassan, 2018; Raza, 2012). Liberal theory also promotes freedom of expression and diversity of opinion in the mass media to influence government policies. Despite these strengths, liberal theory has some flaws as some media organizations, for example, might abuse their freedoms and people who express their views in the media might not do so responsibly and rationally due to their parochial interests. Additionally, as the literature shows, the profit maximization of the commercial media and the concentration and conglomeration of media ownership have undermined critical media watchdog functions, such as the demand for accountability and the fight for public interests (Akhavan-Majid & Wolf, 1991; Hassan, 2018; Ostini & Fung, 2002).

In the Ghanaian context, this study investigates whether the media are completely free and whether they address political corruption. While liberal theory emphasizes structural factors that

impact media organizations, it ignores the role of social actors, including media owners, in determining if the media is genuinely operating responsibly and acting as a critical watchdog of government. The current study uses a comprehensive approach that takes into account both structural and agency factors in shaping media roles in political corruption in Ghana.

3.3.3 Social Responsibility Theory

Social responsibility theory emerged in the mid-20th century from media developments that saw major media organizations overly focus on profitability and also promote powerful interests, including business corporations, which undermine public interests (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Yun, 2008). Baran and Davis (2003) argue that the marketplace of ideas as espoused by liberal theory can provide avenues for powerful corporations to manipulate the media. As expected, the media were abusing their new-found power and freedoms secured as a result of the struggles of the press movement as discussed under liberal theory. This turn of events in the media landscape occasioned the need for effective media regulation, including adherence to journalistic ethics, so that journalists and media organizations could be held responsible for their bad conduct (McQuail, 2010). In the United States, these concerns on the media's role and freedom saw the establishment of the Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press in 1947 (Hachten, 1992; Siebert, Peteron, & Schramm, 1963).

The commission's report significantly influenced the conception of social responsibility theory (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2005; Siebert, Peteron, & Schramm, 1963). This report emphasized that the mass media should honor their social responsibility to society and operate within the regulatory and ethical guidelines. It indicated that the mass media (1) has an responsibility towards society, (2) should showcase the diversity of the community by providing a platform for different viewpoints and reactions, (3) must be professional in its work and accountable to society, (4) be self-regulating, as the law requires, (5) be truthful, accurate, objective and balanced in its reportage, (6) should refrain from inciting violence, crime, or civil disorder, and (7) should work to preserve democratic credentials (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Siebert, Peteron, & Schramm, 1963; Yun, 2008).

Social responsibility theory emphasizes media professionalism and ethical and regulatory standards to ensure that media reportage reflects the truth and serves public interests. Although the theory encourages private media ownership, it also urges private owners to publish and broadcast within the boundaries of the law and ethical guidelines. The theory also urges the media to

contribute to addressing social problems, such as corruption, by doing investigative reporting to expose the ills of society and the forces behind such problems for necessary redress. It also emphasizes that the mass media are a crucial institution for nurturing democracy by providing the platforms for expressing dissenting and diverse views. In the Ghanaian context, for example, the role of the media in consolidating democracy in the Fourth Republic is well documented (Asare 2009; Aikins, 2013; Dzisah, 2008).

To sum up, in their reportage the mass media are expected to be responsible for preserving democracy, for helping to address the problems of society and for ensuring positive social transformations by providing an avenue for public debate and constructive criticism of the government. Although it emphasizes the social responsibility of the press towards society, this theory fails to illuminate the complex interaction of structural forces and agency factors that shape the actual workings of the media. As the literature shows, media ownership interests and press conglomeration are increasingly becoming the hallmarks of the unfettered media market competition that has mostly sacrificed social responsibility for synergy and profit maximization (Akhavan-Majid & Wolf, 1991; Besley & Pratt, 2006; Jarso, 2010; McQuail, 2010; Ostini & Fung, 2002). In this regard, the current study critically examines whether the private mass media in Ghana honor their social responsibility to society (as per Article 162(5), Republic of Ghana, 1996) in the fight against political corruption within the confines of relevant laws and acceptable ethical standards.

3.3.4 The Development School

The development school arose out of the need to have a media theory that takes into account the historical and cultural realities of the postcolonial and developing countries in Africa, Asia and South America (McQuail, 2005; Otini & Fung, 2002; Piontek, 2016). Following independence from European colonization, the colonial masters urged the postcolonial countries to learn from them if they wanted to develop. Modernization theory suggests that Third World countries can only advance if they follow in the footsteps of Western nations, such as the US and the UK. The theory assumes that transfer of technology and knowledge, the inflow of capital and foreign aid and the adoption of capitalism, which emphasizes unfettered market competition and privatization of state corporations, would accelerate development (Escobar, 2011; Frank, 1969; Halperin, 2013; Todaro & Smith, 2003). The Structural Adjustment Programs, intended to limit the government's role in the 1980s, was part of these efforts to make developing countries model their development

agenda on Western prescriptions for achieving the needed economic growth (Babb, 2005; Easterly, 2003).

Despite the implementation of the ideas associated with modernization theory, the economic situation of developing countries deteriorated. It became apparent that the structural foundations of the developing nations were entirely different from those of the developed world and, therefore, a new model of development was needed (Frank, 1969; Halperin, 2013). This development gave birth to the cultural, economic and political movement that sought to wean post-colonial countries from their colonial masters to prevent neo-colonialism and continued exploitation. The intellectual work, originating with studies in Latin America (Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Peru), which typifies this movement is known as dependency theory (Frank, 1969; Halperin, 2013; Todaro & Smith, 2003). This theory emerged in the 1950s under the leadership of Raul Prebisch, a former Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America. Prebisch and his colleagues wanted to know why economic growth had eluded the Latin American countries while the industrialized countries were progressing economically at a faster pace (Ferraro, 2008; Halperin, 2013). The explanation was that developing nations were exporting primary commodities at lower prices while importing manufactured goods made from the primary products at a higher cost. The central recommendation was for developing countries to pursue import substitution programs to address the economic growth and balance of payment deficit.

The dependency theory draws attention to the sophisticated and subtle forms of neo-colonialism that continue to subjugate and exploit the developing countries. The central premise of this theory is that the economies of postcolonial nations were structured to supply low-priced raw materials to support industrialization in developed countries to the detriment of developing countries, which purchase the finished products at exorbitant costs. Wallerstein's (1989, 1992) world system theory suggests that poverty and inequality within and between nations are due to the unfair division of labor based on the capitalist world economic system in which the center – including the US and UK – exploits the periphery – such as Ghana.

Similar to the dependency line of thought, development theory of the mass media suggests that another form of imperialist post-colonial domination is the information flow in the traditional media that supports colonial ideas, lifestyles, tastes and preferences, and values and norms (Sparks, 2007; Zuchelli, 1993). The development theory assumes that mass media operations premised on the colonial masters' models, such as liberal theory, advance or consolidate cultural imperialism

by transmitting colonial masters' culture and ideology that do not reflect local circumstances, cultural heritage, and needs in the post-colonial countries. One scholar puts it this way:

The powerful core nations have undermined the weaker, developing nations' cultural heritage so that the attainment of western cultural norms and the concepts of consumerism have become the ideal. However, the core nations do not absorb and integrate the cultural norms of third world nations into their society. It is a one-way flow, from core to periphery. (Zuchelli, 1993, pp.13-14).

Developmental theory of the media is critical of this one-way flow of information. It proposes a shift from disseminating information that supports Western ideological and cultural supremacy to emphasizing local cultures and development needs and mobilizing public support for them.

Development theory originated from the theoretical works of Lerner (1963) and Schramm (1964). This theory suggests that the media's critical watchdog role, which liberal theory emphasizes, is unwarranted in postcolonial countries making frantic efforts to develop. Instead, the development theory proposes that the media should rally behind government to help execute the national development agenda. According to this theory, the postcolonial countries need the mass media to educate the people about the need to be involved in forging a new social order that ensures development, independence and the cultural identity of these countries. It thus suggests that the social responsibility of the mass media towards society should take primacy over media and citizens' rights and freedoms (Lerner, 1963; Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2005; Otini & Fung, 2002; Piontek, 2016; Schramm, 1964). Development theory also asserts that media programming and content should be tailored to the development needs of developing countries. The media should focus on providing information about development programs and projects and their potential benefits to the people (Schramm, 1964; Servaes, 2005). By so doing, they should solicit public support for the country's development efforts.

Development theory posits that there is a positive correlation between national development efforts and the mass media. This theory asserts that the mass media can support development in a variety of ways, including providing opportunities for broadening policy discussions, legitimizing social norms, focusing national attention on relevant development-related issues and changing attitudes and beliefs inimical to development (Moemeka, 1999; Schramm, 1964; Servaes, 2008). Today, media broadcast programs are intended to facilitate the eradication of extreme poverty, achievement of universal primary education, and promotion of gender equality. They have also been partners in both national and global efforts to promote

environmental sustainability, address child mortality, and fight HIV/AIDS (Gayen, 2012, p. 37). The power of the mass media to inform, educate and publicize issues of national importance is supposed to be exploited to support development.

One of the concerns about the media's critical watchdog role relates to a potential threat to a consolidation of democracy or political stability (Patterson, 1996; Swanson, 2004), especially in postcolonial countries. Excessive negative reportage may create dislike for the government, which could lead to a coup d'état to overthrow the sitting government. The mass media should thus focus on supporting the political leadership to prevent inciting rebellion and violence in postcolonial countries by disregarding the media's critical watchdog role. The inherent danger in media supporting the political leadership is that unchecked political powers can potentially undermine development efforts through concealment of wrongdoings, such as corruption in government. This theory also incorrectly assumes that media systems operating based on liberal and social responsibility theories do not foster development. The current study questions this assumption by examining if the private media modeled on Western-originated watchdog theory promotes development via checking political corruption in Ghana.

3.3.5 Democratic Participant Theory

Democratic participant theory emerged to address the deficiencies of the other theoretical positions on mass media. The development school, for example, fosters authoritarianism and prevents any demand for government accountability by way of critical media watchdogging. On the other hand, liberal theory leans towards concentrating the control and ownership of the mass media in a few powerful corporations through the push for the commercialization of the media sector. The profit motives of the private commercial media are more likely to undermine the public interests. In response to these limitations, democratic participant theory originated from the grass-roots media developments in the 1960s to counter the commercialization, monopolization, and centralization (top-down approach) of the press (Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2010). Gaynor and O'Brian explain it this way:

Free from the coercive power of advertisers and commercial interests and owned, managed and run by local communities, community stations open up space for local talk by local people on issues of local interest and concern. In doing so, community radio represents a key element in the empowerment, development and consolidation of local communities – a key element in other words – of community development. (Gaynor & O'Brian, 2011, p. 438).

This excerpt indicates that democratic participant theory emphasizes bottom-up public participation in the democratic process to address the concerns of the masses in their local communities. As Salazar and Hammer (2008) argue, “Each community radio station is inextricably linked to the particular community that developed it and is tailored to the culture, concerns, history, and current events of the community it serves” (p.180). By extension, this theory makes a case for media pluralism and decentralization and equality of opportunity for different segments of society at the local level to express their diverse opinions in their local languages in media programming, and content development to reflect their unique circumstances and needs.

Democratic participant theory is evident in the concept of community radios, newspapers, televisions and any other forms of media, such as the recent social media platforms that are also available at the local level (Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2010). These local media are now gaining popularity in some developing countries including Ghana (National Communication Authority, 2017). Additionally, community-based nonprofit media entities devoted to investigative journalism are gradually gaining root in some countries, such as Jordan, Romania and South Africa (Coronel, 2008). Coronel (2008, p. 9) argues that this crop of media organizations helps “fill a gap in media systems where the market, ownership, or political pressures make investigative reporting by commercial or state-owned media difficult if not impossible.” These nonprofit privately-owned mass media organizations often funded by foundations and international organizations (Coronel, 2008) are intended to provide an irresistible force to ensure government accountability and to promote public interests.

The democratic participant theory addresses the issue of marginalization by emphasizing inclusion and equal access for different groups in the media public sphere to tailor development to suit their needs. The local community media are expected to function as an instrument of positive social change in the communities. The existence of local media is also supposed to help strengthen democracy by increasing public participation in the democratic process. According to democratic participant theory, the community media should be impartial by not aligning with any specific political party, especially the governing party. However, as the state is expected to provide support for the local media regarding funding and capacity building (Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2010), the governing party is likely to have some leverage in using these platforms to facilitate their re-election bid to maintain political power in developing democracies such as Ghana. The goal of the democratic participant theory is to promote grass-roots development. While this study does not

focus on community radios, it investigates the traditional mainstream media's role in facilitating growth at both the national and local level by checking political corruption that affects national budgetary allocations for the district levels.

3.3.6 Public Sphere Theory

Participatory democratic theory broadly proposes public participation in political decision-making processes anchored on rational discussions and public debate towards opinion formation to shape government agenda in favor of public interests (Baiocchi, 2005; Fishkin, 2011; Elster, 1998; Hagen, 1992). This theory emphasizes the creation and protection of public space in which people are equally empowered to freely engage in rational debate on public concerns to influence government actions and inactions. It considers the mass media dominated public sphere particularly crucial in facilitating and forming public opinion. The theory of the public sphere, however, suggests that powerful interests have taken over the mass media dominated public sphere to advance private interests to the detriment of the collectivity (Habermas, 1989; Mills, 1951, 1956). This theory claims that the mass media have become a component of the existing power structure of the dominant ruling elites.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1989) argues that the public sphere is a socio-spatial space where private people can freely converge and engage in critical and rational discourse to articulate societal needs with the view to influencing state policies. This public sphere is thus initially an open interactive platform for political communication purposes to advance public interests. Habermas (1989) argues, however, that giant corporations, media experts, and dominant elites have assumed control over the contemporary mass media public sphere to manipulate public opinion and advance their interests. In this sense, the media cannot be expected to act as an effective watchdog against these interests.

Habermas's (1989) work describes the shift from the bourgeois public sphere consisting of social spaces that emerged in Europe around the 17th century to a contemporary media-dominated public square. London coffee houses, Paris salons, and the print media were some of the examples of the public sphere in London (England) and Paris (France) where people could debate on the needs of society and think about organizing for political action. He argues that this bourgeois public sphere provided a robust platform free from the incursions of the state and market and facilitated a rational and critical public debate on issues of national concern. Habermas further

suggests that this public sphere, which provided opportunities for every segment of the population to express their opinions freely in public matters, used to play a critical watchdog role.

According to Habermas, over time, this public sphere changed. By the late 19th century it had become institutionalized and paved the way for big corporations and dominant political groupings to capture it for promoting their private interests at the expense of the public good (Habermas, 1989). As big corporations came to assume power over the contemporary public sphere to manipulate and control both the media and the state, private interests performed political functions for their parochial gains. Habermas suggests that this transformation – driven by monopolistic capitalist culture and facilitated by the invention and industrialization of the printing press – has undermined the critical watchdog functions of today's media public sphere. Habermas (1989) argues that the public sphere has departed from the realm of rational discourse for consensus building in the national interest to become an arena of staged discussions, which shape public opinion in support of private interests. This development has become part of the broader structures of management, manipulation and social control in contemporary societies. Habermas's (1989) emphasis on rational-discursive debate reflects Enlightenment thought, which privileged rationality, reason, and science as bases for human actions from the 18th century (Ritzer, 2011).

Although he offers an insightful theoretical framework for analyzing and understanding the public sphere, communication, and media, Habermas's (1989) account of the bourgeois public sphere is not wholly correct. The bourgeois public sphere failed to serve the interests of all members of the public, such as women, plebeians and the working class (Fraser, 1992; Garnham, 1992; Susen, 2011). The bourgeois public sphere mainly promoted the interests of the dominant elites while suppressing the marginalized. Habermas also failed to account for multiple public spheres, such as the oppositional public spheres representing the voices of less powerful people, including women and plebeians (Fraser, 1992; Garnham, 1992; Susan, 2011). Moreover, counter to Habermas's (1989) claim of rationality, rational thinking does not always characterize discussions in the public sphere as people's emotions sometimes cloud their thinking and analysis. Finally, Habermas assumes incorrectly that political issues can always be addressed through rational-discursive public debates that are entirely free from partisan interests and power dynamics to create a true emancipatory society for the benefit of all citizens.

Despite these limitations, Habermas's construction of the public sphere is crucial for understanding the importance of a two-way political communication process (between the ruled

and the ruler) and the nature of contemporary mass media and public opinion in shaping modern democratic governance. Habermas's public sphere theoretical framework appears to be the dominant representative voice of the critical school of thought, which questions the critical watchdog role of today's mass media dominated public spheres.

Like Habermas, other scholars have argued that mass media have become a manipulative and propagandist tool for powerful corporations and political power holders to promote their interests (Ansah, 1991; Barnett & Gaber, 2001; Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Dahhlgren & Sparks, 1995; Mills, 1951, 1956; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). According to Barnett and Gaber (2001), "The vital function of independent and critical political reporting is progressively undermined to the benefit of those in power" (p. 1). Expressing a similar viewpoint, Ansah (1991) argues that the power of advertisers has undermined the normative role of the privately-owned commercial mass media. Similarly, according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), "Rather than a watchdog of powerful institutions, the press is vulnerable to being their tool" (p. 53). In contrast to claims of the liberal theory, this theory of the public sphere indicates that the mass media have rarely performed a watchdog role. In the US context, for example, Akhavan-Majid and Wolf (1991) proposed an elite power group model to indicate that the mass media conglomeration and concentration of ownership and media partnership with influential groups, including big businesses and powerful elites, have compromised the critical media watchdog functions. In *White Collar*, Mills (1951) also articulates the critical role of the mass media in influencing individual behavior and encouraging compliance with middle-class values. He argues that the media are increasingly shaping individual aspirations and behavior and, above all, promoting values of individual success (Mills, 1951). At the same time, powerful interests use the media for influencing public opinion to their advantage through manipulation and propaganda (Mills, 1951, 1956; 1999).

Similar to Mills' (1951, 1999) and Habermas's (1989) theoretical narratives disputing media watchdog functions in modern democratic societies, other scholars have expressed a similar view (Barnett & Gaber, 2001; Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Dahhlgren & Sparks, 1995; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Barnett and Gaber, (2001), for example, argue that mass media have increasingly deviated from the core mandate of advancing accountability in societies to promoting powerful interests. Dijk (1989, 1995) also emphasizes that hegemonic interests command all channels of communication and discourses for their benefits and those of their allies. These powerful interests are "the manufacturers of public knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, norms, values,

morals, and ideologies” (Dijk, 1989, p. 22), which they use to rationalize and maintain their privileges. In the Ghanaian case, this dissertation anticipates that political actors and their allies who benefit from political corruption may take steps, including controlling law enforcement and the media, to conceal their corrupt practices.

In sum, the theory of the public sphere suggests that mass media have become the mouthpiece of powerful interests rather than holding them to account. The mass media dominated public sphere is no longer a social space that allows the citizenry to freely participate in rational-critical discourse on matters affecting their welfare and that enables society as a whole to shape public opinion. Rather than facilitating a discursive debate to promote public interests, mass media have become an active player in manipulative political communication processes to advance powerful interests. An empirical literature review indicates that the mass media can receive payoffs from influential businesses and politicians involved in corruption and refrain from publishing acts of corruption that can dent the image of their clients (Coronel, 2008; Jarso, 2010; Li, 2013; Sowumni et al., 2010). The current study investigates ways in which the mass media constitute a barrier to addressing corruption, and the factors that enable the mass media’s involvement in corruption.

3.3.7 Limits of the Media Theories

The major theories of the press – such as liberal, authoritarian, and social responsibility previously discussed – are normative frameworks with very limited explanatory power. As Ostini and Fung (2002) argue, “Normative theories lack explanatory power in that they are based on how things should be and do not necessarily relate to how things are” (p. 45). Political ideologies and historical factors influenced the construction of the four dominant theories – authoritarian, libertarian, Soviet-Communist and social responsibility – that Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm first developed in 1956 (1963). Post-cold war political changes, however, have rendered these four theories almost inapplicable to explaining the dynamics of contemporary media systems. The four theories also incorrectly assume an evolutionary nature of development where press systems would move from one stage to the other, such as from communist to authoritarian to liberal and social responsibility. These theories of the press are not flexible enough to explain the contemporary dynamic media (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979). To find a solution to this, Merrill and Lowenstein (1979) added a fifth concept hinged on ownership to classify media systems into private, government and multi-party ownership.

Another criticism of the four theories is that they fail to address the economic influences on media systems. Critiquing the four theories of the press, Akhavan-Majid and Wolf (1991, p. 139) argue that these theories ignore the role of the economy in influencing media systems. By way of explanation, Akhavan-Majid and Wolf (1991, p. 139) further argue that liberal theory cannot explain the contemporary US media system since media concentration, conglomeration of ownership and competition for profit have compromised the independence of mass media. In the place of these theories of the press, Akhavan-Majid and Wolf (1991) propose an elite power group model that considers media concentration and partnerships with powerful groups, such as big business and powerful elites. This model suggests that diversity of views and the performance of the critical watchdog role of mass media are limited. While Akhavan-Majid and Wolf (1991) introduce an economic dimension into the analysis of media systems, they limit their examination to the macro-level. However, other factors such as editorial decisions and journalistic ethics and reporting also influence media systems (Ostini & Fung, 2002). As the four theories of the press draw heavily on political systems as structural forces shaping the media systems, they fail to illuminate the interplay of structural and agency factors in shaping the actual production and consumption of news, as well as the practical role of the mass media.

Although attempts have been made to expand these four theories of the press and address their limitations, the revisions and the new models, including democratic participant theory, suffer from the same or similar weaknesses (Ostini & Fung, 2002). One new model was developed by Hachten (1992), who proposed five theories of the press: Western, authoritarian, revolutionary, developmental (third world) and Communist. His conceptualization of the authoritarian model is similar to that of Siebert et al. (1963) and Merrill and Lowenstein (1979). Hachten's (1981, p. 64) Western concept integrates both the liberal and social responsibility theories, its hallmark being that the media operate relatively free of arbitrary government controls. Hachten (1981, p. 69) argues that the revolutionary concept is an illegal medium established for overthrowing a government or gaining power from foreign rulers. According to Hachten (1981, p. 72), a combination of Communist ideology, anti-Americanism and social-responsibility ideals led to the emergence of the developmental model. However, as Ostini and Fung (2002) argue, Hachten's classifications are short of transcending structural explanations based on state systems (communist, authoritarian and libertarian) and media objectives (revolutionary and developmental).

Other models have been developed in response to the four theories of the press. One of these was posited by Altschul (1995), who proposed three categories of the press: the market, communitarian and advancing (p. 419). The market typology is one in which the media often operate without outside interference. The communitarian system serves the public interests based on the goals of the political party or government while the advancing system is where the media work as government partners (Altschull, 1995). Picard's (1985) also proposed a model. His focus on state-press relations also ignores micro-level interactions among journalists, organizations, and the state. The media theories discussed have foregrounded the influences of political and the economic systems – the structural factors – on the conception of media systems, while the role of actors within and without the media systems in shaping media production, consumption and goals has been ignored. As Ostini and Fung (2002) argue, “A primary focus on the economy and the state ignores the semi-autonomous nature of the press that operates also on the basis of journalistic professionalism” (p. 46). The theories thus focus attention exclusively on structural forces and disregard individual media practitioners' sense of professionalism, independence and worldviews or values.

While making a significant contribution to the integration of structural and agency factors, Ostini and Fung (2002) limited their conception of agency to only professional factors, namely individual journalistic values and autonomy. A new model that comprehensively integrates both structural and agency factors is necessary for explaining and understanding the nature of media operations and purposes at a particular time within defined historical, political, economic and social contexts. This study proposes a comprehensive theoretical framework that takes into account the interplay of structural and agency factors in explaining the dynamics of actual media functions and whether they contribute to anti-political-corruption efforts in Ghana.

3.4 Theory of Structuration

Democratic theory fails to account for the role of social actors in shaping the political and mass media systems because it mainly addresses the structural conditions that affect media organization, purposes, and functions in democratic societies. This limitation has necessitated the inclusion of Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration in the theoretical framework to explain clearly and comprehensively the role of the mass media in practice as far as the fight against political corruption in Ghana is concerned.

Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration brings human agency factors into focus and elucidates the constant and complex interaction between agency and structure in shaping social actions and phenomena. Giddens (1984) uses the dialectic concept of power to untangle the interface between structure and human agency. Giddens (1984) recognizes structures – the legal framework and resources – and the role of actors in producing and changing these structures. Political institutions, for instance, impose structures, such as laws that both enable and constrain what social actors (including individuals and organizations) can and cannot do. DiMaggion and Powell (1983), for example, point to coercive factors involving political pressures and the force of the state in exercising control, including regulatory oversight to shape the conduct of social actors such as interest groups and corporations.

On the other hand, Giddens (1984) argues that to be an agent (human) means to have power. By implication, every social actor has power, the ability to act (or not to act) as a human being. The quantum of power each social actor possesses is, however, dependent upon the amount of allocative (material) and authoritative (human) resources that each agent commands. Giddens (1984) emphasizes that human beings have unequal power given the variations in the distribution of allocative and authoritative resources. Agents use their power mediated in resources such as rules to consolidate or increase their access to more resources.

This dialectic concept of power is useful for explaining the dynamics of the relationship between the media and corruption. Actors who benefit from corruption (i.e., pro-corruption force) might use their power to maintain the existing corrupt social order. In contrast, agents who do not gain from corruption or who view corruption as a threat to national security and development might also decide to use their resources or power to fight corruption (i.e., the anti-corruption force). This dialectic concept of power indicates that the anti-corruption field is potentially a site of constant struggles with competing interests in which the mass media will either associate with corruption or fight corruption.

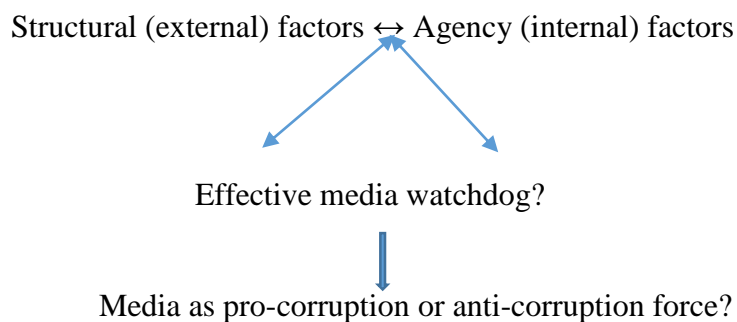
Giddens' theory broadly explains the interplay of structural and agency factors affecting mass media's relationship to corruption as pro- or anti-corruption force. This insight informs the current study, which questions structural and agency factors that interact to enable or compromise the media's critical watchdog role. Based on the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed, examples of these structural factors are press freedom, anti-corruption legal frameworks, freedom of speech, media regulations and accountability (Jarso; 2010; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016).

Agency factors include media corruption, profit considerations, editorial leadership, the history and culture of the media outlets and personal interests of journalists (Coronel, 2008). Using Giddens' theory, the proposed research investigates both agency and structural factors that shape the role of the media in corruption. Otini & Fung (2002) have demonstrated the importance of using a theoretical framework, which captures the complex interplay of structural and agency factors, in explaining the actual media behaviors and performances in the real world. Similarly, Coronel (2008) emphasizes the need to incorporate both structural and agency factors to explain whether the mass media perform their watchdog functions in practice. Using Giddens' theory of structuration to explain if the private mass media contribute to national efforts at addressing political corruption is consistent with this body of literature.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

Although the existing literature provides a general context within which to situate this proposed study, an articulated theoretical framework for guiding this study is more useful. Figure 1 below thus provides a graphical summary of this theoretical framework, incorporating theories of democracy, the media watchdog, the public sphere, and structuration to inform this study.

Figure 3.1. Theoretical framework



The main reason for using this theoretical framework is that it provides a more comprehensive and nuanced explanation of the dynamics and complexities of the research problem than would any single theory deployed in isolation. The theories selected are relevant to this study because they collectively explain the nature and purpose of Ghana's democratic political system and the mass media more comprehensively. The theories are also useful for specifying the kind of research questions to ask, the possible range of answers expected and strategies for making sense of those responses.

Since Ghana is a democratic country, democratic theory is relevant to this study as it illuminates the country's current political system and the purpose and functions of the mass media in democratic settings in promoting government accountability. It has been discussed that media systems usually derive from the type of the political system within a particular spatial-temporal context (Hesmodnhalgh & Toynbee, 2011; Karppinen, 2013; Phelan & Dahlberg, 2011). Democratic theory elucidates the structural conditions, including the political system and accompanying human rights and press freedoms that shape the workings and expectations of the mass media in Ghana as a democratic country. This theory explains the form of governance in which citizens, for example, can freely choose their leadership in multi-party elections, enjoy civil and political liberties and hold their leadership to account (Heywood, 2012; Fishkin, 2011; United Nations, 1996; Venter, 2012; Wolin, 2004). One of the ways by which citizens can check the excesses of their leadership is through critical and vibrant media. The mass media are the fourth arm of the democratic government. They have the mandate to hold the executive, the legislature and the judiciary accountable to ensure that political office holders pursue programs and policies to meet the needs of the citizenry (Heywood, 2012; Dzisah, 2008; Fishkin, 2011; United Nations, 1996; Venter, 2012; Wolin, 2004). In Ghana, Article 162(5) mandates the media to contribute to transparency and government accountability.

As Figure 1 shows, the media watchdog theory that incorporates ideas associated with democratic, liberal and social responsibility theories is relevant to this study because it illuminates the specific role and functions of the private media in addressing political corruption in Ghana. This theory guides this study to examine how the mass media contribute to transparency and accountability in democratic political settings, such as Ghana, by broadening anti-corruption discussions, making the political leadership consider addressing corruption (agenda-setting) and investigating and exposing political corruption (Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Hachten, 1992; Arnold & Lal, 2012; McQuail, 2010; Rajak, 2014; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000).

The mass media are one of the fundamental components of liberal democratic theory and one of the critical foundations of democratic governance. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), therefore, described the mass media as a fourth estate or the fourth branch of a democratic government, expected to check the remaining arms of government, namely the executive, legislature and judiciary (Dzisah, 2008; Fishkin, 2011; Heywood, 2012; Venter, 2012). Hence, proponents of liberal political theory argue for press liberalization to ensure unfettered market competition in the

media landscape and media freedom and autonomy from government control to act as a powerful watchdog in society (Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963). This watchdog role requires the mass media to focus on mounting surveillance over powerful interests, including government officials, to protect public resources such as the public purse. Based on this notion of surveillance, Walter Lippman aptly describes the mass media as the “beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision” (as cited in Barnet & Gabber, 2001, p. 2). This insight accentuates the critical investigative functions of the media to expose any hidden wrongdoing, such as political corruption in society.

Social responsibility theory builds on liberal theory and emphasizes the social responsibilities owed by the mass media to society, specifically to play an active watchdog role. Mass media outlets are, therefore, expected to be free, independent, fair, thorough and critical in their work, thus contributing to transparency and accountability (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963). On the whole, mass media are a potentially dominant force against any form of abuse of power in society. This theory suggests that the private mass media can contribute to fighting political corruption.

Consistent with social responsibility theory, Chapter twelve of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana mandates all forms of media to contribute to state transparency and accountability in the interests of all Ghanaians (Republic of Ghana, 1996). As indicated in Figure 1, the media watchdog theory, as used in this study, incorporates liberal and social responsibility theories and the concept of the fourth estate to explain and specify how the media may perform watchdog functions in Ghana. These theories that assume the mass media can contribute to fighting political corruption guide the current study to answer this question: “How do the mass media contribute to addressing political corruption?”

Habermas’s theory of the public sphere applies to this study since it explains the possibility that the media may not honor their watchdog obligations in democratic societies, such as Ghana. In particular, this theory illuminates the specific ways in which the mass media may fail to perform their watchdog functions in democratic societies. These pathways include partisan reporting, propaganda peddling, political affiliation and corruption (Habermas, 1989; Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Mills, 1951, 1956; Vaidya, 2005). The theory of the public sphere as used in this study indicates a cluster of theoretical insights that cast doubts on the notion of the media watchdog

functions in contemporary democracies. This theoretical school acknowledges that the mass media provide a crucial platform for political participation, which is important for checking the arbitrary use of public power to ensure that government responds to the aspirations and needs of the citizenry (Habermas, 1989; Mills, 1951, 1956). Despite this importance of the media for deepening participatory (discourse) democracy to enhance the collective well-being, this theory suggests that the contemporary media have deviated from this fundamental purpose and now serve powerful interests via propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion (Barnett & Gaber, 2001; Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; Dahlgren & Sparks, 1995; Mills, 1951, 1956; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). This critical theory assumes that the media contribute to political corruption. This assumption raises the following theoretical questions: (1) How do the mass media contribute to the problem of political corruption? (2) What factors encourage media's support for and involvement with political corruption? These theoretical questions have provided the impetus for this research project.

Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration is relevant to this study since it elucidates the influences of both structural forces and human agency on the political and mass media systems in a particular context. The theories of democracy, the mass media watchdog, and the public sphere emphasize the structural forces in shaping media watchdog functions and ignore the role of agency factors, such as the professional motivations of media owners and practitioners. The theory of structure (Giddens, 1984) addresses this limitation by emphasizing the importance of both structural and agency factors in explaining whether the private mass media perform their democratic watchdog functions in practice. This theory sheds light on the broader interplay of both structural and agency factors (see Figure 1) that collectively affect the way the mass media operate and the visions, values and beliefs that guide the work of the mass media. This theoretical insight focuses attention on this question: "Which structural and agency factors encourage or compromise the media's watchdog functions in fighting political corruption?"

The theoretical framework is, therefore, relevant to the current study, which investigates whether and how the media fulfill their assigned watchdog functions in tackling political corruption in Ghana. Previous studies (Haque, 2012; Srivastava, 2016; Stapenhurst, 2000) investigating the watchdog role of the media in democratic societies have also drawn on democratic and media watchdog theories. The current theoretical framework provides a more

comprehensive explanation for the research problem than would any individual theory used in isolation.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the authoritarian, liberal, social responsibility, development-oriented, democratic participant and public sphere theories to provide a rich debate and perspectives on the role, organization, and regulation of mass media institutions. These theories of the media indicate that the values, visions, and operations of the mass media relate to the character of the political system or regime. The authoritarian theory discourages the freedom of speech and of the media, and it disallows the media's critical watchdog role over government. In a slightly different tone, development theory emphasizes the need for the mass media to rally behind government to help execute the national development agenda in postcolonial and developing countries, instead of performing critical watchdog role. In contrast to the development and authoritarian theories, democratic-participant, social responsibility and liberal theories encourage mass media's critical watchdog role over government to ensure accountability. In response to the media's tendency to serve powerful interests based on profit motives due to media privatization grounded in liberal theory, democratic participant theory indicates the need for community ownership and control of the mass media to advance public interests.

While situating the current study within this range of theories, the proposed theoretical framework – incorporating democratic theory, watchdog theory, public sphere theory, and Giddens' theory of structuration – explains and guides this research. Democratic theory elucidates the structural conditions that shape the workings and the expectations of the mass media within the Ghanaian democratic political context. Watchdog theory explains the media's social responsibilities towards transparency and accountability in Ghana, while the critical school illuminates ways in which the media are likely to deviate from performing their watchdog functions. The theory of structuration explains the interaction of both structural and agency factors in understanding the mass media's actual role in anti-corruption efforts in Ghana.

The theoretical debate and conflicting research evidence on the mass media's role in ensuring government accountability have kindled my interest in investigating this subject in the Ghanaian context, especially given the lack of an in-depth study in this field. This body of literature has focused my curiosity on this question: "Can privately-owned mass media act as an active anti-corruption force in developing democracies such as Ghana?" I am curious to answer this question

by examining the extent to which the unprecedented proliferation of and the competition in the privately-owned mass media linked to Ghana's efforts at democratic consolidation may have promoted or compromised anti-corruption efforts in Ghana. The next chapter discusses the methodology for the current study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This research examines the extent to which the mass media may either add to or help tackle the problem of political corruption in Ghana to inform anti-corruption theory and policy debates. The theoretical framework previously discussed has informed the research questions and the methodology. A theoretically-driven approach to collect and analyze data is critical in the research process to ensure the credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2013; Ellen, 1984). The purpose of this introduction is, therefore, to explain in greater detail how the theoretical framework, the empirical literature and the research questions and objectives inform the choice of the qualitative methodology and inclusion of some descriptive quantitative analysis in this study.

The theoretically-driven research questions (see Figure 1, p. 63) as adapted to the Ghanaian case include: (1) How have the privately-owned mass media contributed to fighting political corruption in Ghana? (2) How have the private mass media contributed to the problem of political corruption in Ghana? (3) What conditions (factors) have promoted the private mass media's watchdog role in addressing political corruption? (4) What factors have compromised the private mass media's watchdog role in monitoring and fighting political corruption in Ghana? And (5) how can the private mass media be strengthened to be a more dominant force against political corruption in Ghana?

The general objective of this dissertation is to gain more profound insights into whether the private mass media have made any meaningful contributions to the fight against political corruption in Ghana and the factors shaping the role of the media in practice. The study has five specific objectives. First, it examines how the private mass media have contributed to fighting political corruption in Ghana. Second, it investigates how the private mass media have added to the problem of political corruption. Third, it explores factors that have encouraged the private media to address political corruption. Fourth, it analyzes factors that have compromised the media's watchdog role in fighting political corruption. Fifth, it investigates how the private mass media can be empowered to be a proactive anti-corruption force in Ghana.

Both the theoretical framework and the empirical literature that have informed these research objectives and questions support the use of a qualitative methodology as the primary research design. The research objectives and questions that have mainly influenced the choice of

qualitative research strategy as the most appropriate primary research design for the current study constitute the central bridge between the theoretical framework and the methodology (Creswell, 2013; Hamersley, 1992). Hamersley (1992), for instance, argues that the research goals and theoretically-driven research questions should determine the selection of the appropriate research method to employ. Similar to Hamersley's (1992) proposition, Creswell (2013) argues that the nature of the research objectives and questions should dictate the choice of the appropriate research design. More importantly, Creswell (2013), further argues that research questions beginning with "what" and "how" should be the justification for selecting qualitative research strategy. According to Creswell (2013), these types of questions require an in-depth examination of the research problem under investigation. This insight affirms the decision to use qualitative research design in this study since the research questions begin with "how" and "what" and thus call for an in-depth analysis of the role of the media in political corruption. Also, the research goal of this study is to produce a comprehensive and holistic examination of the research problem by situating it in Ghana's historical, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. The qualitative research design is thus more suited to addressing such research questions.

The theoretical framework underpinning this project corroborate the appropriateness of a qualitative research approach. In outlining the theory of structuration, Giddens' (1986, pp. 282 & 290) strategic-conduct analysis underscores the importance of deploying a qualitative approach to capture the complex social context of the interaction between agency and structure in shaping social actions within specific time-space boundaries. This complex interplay of factors, including historical and contemporary socio-economic and political realities that impinge on the workings and quality of democracy and the private mass media in Ghana, can best be captured through the use of qualitative research. This strategic-conduct analysis that accentuates the situatedness of social actions and phenomena provides a link between the theory of structuration and the chosen qualitative research design.

Similarly, democratic theory privileges the use of qualitative design. Several studies that draw on variants of democratic theory to analyze the role of the mass media in democratic countries have employed a qualitative research design (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Asare, 2009; Dzisah, 2008; Fell, 2005; Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Jibo, 2003; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016; Staphenurst, 2000; Sowunmi et al., 2010). Asare (2009), for instance, used democratic theory – deliberative and liberal – to investigate the watchdog role of the media in nurturing democracy in

Ghana. Asare (2009) rightly deployed a qualitative approach as the most appropriate methodology for untangling the complexity of how the private media contribute to democratic consolidation. Like Asare (2009), Dzisah (2008)—whose study was guided by democratic theory and the theories of the media—used a qualitative research design for investigating the role of the print media in the consolidation of democracy in Ghana. These studies demonstrate the nexus between democratic theory and a qualitative research design. The decision to use a qualitative research design in the current study is, therefore, consistent with the existing pertinent empirical literature.

The theoretical framework guiding this study technically falls under the justice interpretive framework, which mostly uses a qualitative research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the research topic to spur positive social change (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013). The central theme underlying the theoretical framework is the emphasis on the pre-conditions for countering an abuse of power and the conditions critical to promoting the abuse of power in society. Democratic theory, for instance, unmasks prerequisites such as the separation of powers, the rule of law and constitutional guarantees for civil and political liberties, proper parliamentary and civil society oversight, and free and independent judiciary and the press for ensuring government accountability.

On the other hand, democratic theory reveals circumstances that facilitate possible abuse of power through concentration of state power in one person or (body), disregard for human and political freedoms and the general suppression of institutions of accountability including the press. Democratic theory thus generally alerts societies to guard against these tendencies. Proponents of democratic theory ultimately seek to deliver freedom and justice by empowering citizens to exercise significant control over people they choose to lead them and ensure that such public officials work in the best interest of the general public. This justice-oriented goal is at the heart of this study.

By creating the consciousness that mass media have become a critical component of the power structure to serve powerful interests at the expense of the collectivity (Habermas, 1989; Mills, 1951, 1956), critical democratic theory ultimately urges corrective measures to advance emancipation and justice. Such awareness is intended to eventually galvanize concerned people into pressurizing both the mass media and governments to honor their social responsibilities to society. In the same vein, through the dialectic concept of power, the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984) calls attention to the constraining and enabling conditions that shape the nature

of social struggles, which involve hegemony and counter-hegemony over the appropriation and control of scarce resources. Giddens' (1984) concept of human agency suggests that all human beings can make a difference in society, such as contributing to arresting injustices through counteracting misuse of political power in society. This insight offers the prospects of the capacity of individual actors and civil society organizations to provide a reliable coalition for the adoption and implementation of anti-corruption reforms.

In the current study, political corruption – which is an abuse of power – points to the dominance of hegemonic interests that culminate in injustices. The mass media may either be an accomplice in perpetuating political corruption or a counterforce to help address the problem. The theoretical framework ultimately encourages a deeper understanding of the conditions producing political corruption in this case and measures necessary for removing such corruption-enabling circumstances through a critical examination of the role of the mass media. According to Bryman and Teevan (2005) and Creswell (2013), studies based on justice-interpretive framework mainly use qualitative research design to facilitate a nuanced understanding of the research problem and foster transformative social action, as intended in the current study.

Aside from the theoretical and empirical literature rationalizing the choice of qualitative approach, the qualitative-quantitative research paradigm debate comes into play in deciding which one of these two approaches is best suited for particular kinds of sociological research. The qualitative research paradigm holds that valid knowledge is attainable through insiders' subjective experiences (Berg, 2012; Creswell 2013). This qualitative paradigm calls for a close connection between the researcher and the researched to help capture the dynamics and complexities of social life as a process to allow for contextualization or more in-depth understanding rather than generalization (Berg, 2012; Creswell 2013). The quantitative research paradigm, in contrast, argues that social reality exists independent of the knower, and it can and should be studied objectively (Maxwell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Oluthwaite & Turner, 2007). Hence, the quantitative paradigm indicates the need for maintaining a distance between the researcher and the researched and emphasizes numbers and statistical analyses—rather than text and textual interpretations—for generalization purposes (Maxwell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Oluthwaite & Turner, 2007). This debate has often tended to assume that one paradigm is superior to the other or that these two approaches cannot be blended if necessary.

Methodological pragmatism, however, challenges these assumptions. This pragmatism suggests that a researcher should select the most appropriate research design(s) and methods to collect meaningful data for answering set research questions to achieve the intended research goals (Bryman, 2004; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Hamersley, 1992; Morgan, 2007; Straus & Corbin, 1990). Bryman (2004) and Morgan (2007), for instance, propose a pragmatic approach to research that (1) transcends the qualitative-quantitative paradigm debate, (2) recognizes the link between the two methods, and (3) acknowledges the advantages of integrating the two research approaches whenever appropriate.

Following methodological pragmatism, the current study employs quantitative secondary data from multiple sources such as the Afrobarometer and the World Value surveys to supplement the primary qualitative data. This triangulation helps produce richer, deeper and more credible insights than when a single data source is used (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Triangulation is useful for assessing the consistency of findings produced by different methods. Using both qualitative and relevant descriptive quantitative data can be more revealing than a single approach in providing valuable insights into issues on which the various data sets may either converge or diverge (Creswell, 2013; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). The decision to use both qualitative and descriptive quantitative data is also consistent with the existing empirical literature (Dzisah, 2008; Haque, 2012), which used a similar approach to examine the role of the mass media in emerging democratic societies, such as Ghana.

To ensure triangulation, the researcher examined the existing media database in Ghana to highlight, for instance, the frequency of media reporting and type of media reporting on political corruption cases. Moreover, data from opinion polls and surveys, such as the Center for Democratic Development (Ghana) survey, provide public opinion on the usage and credibility of the mass media. On the whole, the theoretical framework, empirical literature, the research goal and the type of research questions rationalize the choice of a qualitative approach as the primary research design and the inclusion of secondary data from multiple sources for triangulation purposes.

This introduction has explained how the theoretical framework, the empirical literature and research questions and objectives have informed the decision to use a qualitative methodology as the primary research design and the inclusion of relevant descriptive quantitative analyses in this study. The discussions that follow, however, focus on political corruption, mass media, the study

setting, the qualitative research design and data collection and analysis strategies. It also discusses ethical protocols and fieldwork experience and presents a summary of the discussions.

4.2 Political Corruption

The understandings of corruption, including legal definitions, differ from one society to another (Heywood, 1997; Mbaku, 1999; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Venter, 2012). Heywood (1997, p. 7) argues that what is defined as legal and legitimate differs over time and from one country to the other. Ideally, a definition of corruption should take into account these variations, although such a broad-based definition is difficult to arrive at given the range and the scope of these variations (Heywood, 1997). In this light, it is appropriate to define acts that constitute political corruption in this study based on the current laws of the Republic of Ghana by discussing first the corruption-related laws in the country.

It is worth mentioning that the 1992 Constitution mandates any sitting government to take necessary steps to tackle corruption in Ghana. Article 35(8) under the *Directive Principles of State Policy*, for example, clearly stipulates that “The state shall take steps to eradicate corrupt practices and the abuse of power.” To this end, successive governments in the fourth republic have amended existing laws that provided incentives for corruption while enacting new laws to bolster an anti-corruption legal framework. Ghana passed the *Whistleblower Act 2006* (Act 720) to encourage and offer legal protections for people to provide tip-offs about suspected cases of corruption to the appropriate authorities for necessary action to be taken (Government of Ghana, 2006). In another significant development, the Government of Ghana (2003) passed the *Public Procurement Act 663* designed to address the high rate of corruption that characterizes public procurement processes.

Ghana’s constitutional provisions conceptualize corruption in both general and specific terms. Article 218(E) of the 1992 Constitution states that “corruption and the misappropriation of public money by officials” is an offense (Republic of Ghana, 1996, p. 108). Article 284 addresses conflicts of interest (Republic of Ghana, 1996). However, sections 240 to 245 and 252 to 254 of *Criminal Offences Act 29 – 1960* provide more clarity by defining specific acts, such as extortion and bribery, which constitute corruption offenses in Ghana (Government of Ghana, 1960). As section 240 of this Act states,

A public officer, juror, or voter is guilty of corruption in respect of the duties of his office or vote, if he directly or indirectly agrees or offers to permit his conduct as such officer, juror, or voter to be influenced by the gift, promise, or prospect of any

valuable consideration to be received by him, or by any other person, from any person whomsoever. (Government of Ghana, 1960, p.86).

This provision shows that public officers' solicitation, acceptance or expectation of bribes of any kind to influence the performance of their official duties shall be guilty of corruption. Similarly, offering bribes to public officials is a crime in Ghana as section 241 of the same *Criminal Offences Act 1960* stipulates the following:

A person is guilty of corrupting a public officer, juror, or voter in respect of the duties of his office or in respect of his vote, if he endeavors directly or indirectly to influence the conduct of such public officer, juror, or voter in respect of the duties of his office or in respect of his vote, by the gift, promise, or prospect of any valuable consideration to be received by such public officer, juror, or voter, or by other person, from any person whomsoever. (Government of Ghana, 1960, p. 86).

This excerpt demonstrates that persons or entities who bribe or attempt to bribe any public official to influence the discharge of specific official functions to their advantage or that of a third party shall equally be guilty of corruption. Additionally, sections 247 and 260 of the same Act 1960 make extortion and withholding of public money by public officers as a corruption offense. As section 247 of this Criminal Offences Act – 1960 (Act 29) states,

A public officer commits extortion who, under color of office, demands or obtains from a person, whether for public purposes or for personal gain, or for any other person money or valuable consideration which the public officer knows is not lawfully authorized or at a time at which the public officer knows is not lawfully authorized to demand or to obtain that money or valuable consideration. (Government of Ghana, 1960, p. 87).

Ghana's legal provisions thus indicate that bribery, extortion, misappropriation of public funds, corruption or any abuse of power by public officials for their undue advantage or that of a third party constitute an offense if proven beyond reasonable doubt.

Another point worth emphasizing is that the giving and accepting of gifts are generally normal or legally and culturally permitted only if they are not intended to influence the performance of public officials' designated duties and promote private interests. On the other hand, if gifts are given in exchange for favors, then they are considered acts of corruption (African Union, 2004; Klitgaard, 1988; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; United Nations, 2004). For example, according to Ghana's sections 240 and 241 of *Criminal Offences Act 29 – 1960* (Government of Ghana, 1960) and Article 286(4) of the 1992 Constitution (Republic of Ghana, 1996), giving gifts in return for favors and accepting gifts to do favors constitute corruption.

Seen in this light, Ghana's laws specify a range of acts, including giving and taking of bribes in return for favors, which are categorized as corrupt offenses. As this study focuses on acts of political corruption committed by members of the executive arm of government in implementing state social intervention schemes, it excludes any acts of corruption perpetuated by parliamentarians, citizens and business corporations without the involvement of the executive body. As a result, for this dissertation, the definition of political corruption is limited. In this dissertation, *political corruption encompasses acts committed by members of the executive arm of government (whether elected or appointed) for their undue benefit or that of a third party in breach of the relevant laws, policies and procedures in executing their official duties in specific social intervention schemes.*⁴ Examples may include (1) illegal diversion of funds and resources for development projects for private interests, (2) embezzlement or misappropriation of funds and (3) solicitation or acceptance of a bribe.

Knowing the magnitude of prevailing corruption in any given institutional context is helpful in mounting pressures for pertinent reforms. The existing literature indicates that researching the views of relevant stakeholders, investigating specific projects and tracking the extent of institutional weaknesses creating incentives for corruption provide some measure or picture of corrupt practices (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mustruzzi, 2007; Transparency International, 2018b). The extent of corruption can be estimated by (1) surveying the experiences and informed views of relevant stakeholders including firms, academics, public officials, individuals and anti-corruption organizations and (2) consistently assessing the degree of opportunities and incentives for corruption. Corruption can also be measured by investigating specific projects through financial audits, a commission of inquiry and investigative journalism, for example, to establish whether or not particular acts of corruption may have been committed (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mustruzzi, 2007; Transparency International, 2018b). A typical example based on these strategies is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) used for ranking 180 countries and territories depending on perceived levels of public sector corruption. CPI draws on experts and business people's views to assign scores from zero to hundred depending on the perceived levels of corruption in a given geopolitical setting (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mustruzzi, 2007; Transparency International, 2018b).

⁴ Notwithstanding this working definition, participants' conception of corruption that move beyond the legal conceptions will be documented in this study.

Although the purpose of this study is not to measure corruption per se, it uses relevant secondary and primary data collected based on the above measures and indicators of corruption discussed to gauge the extent of political corruption in social intervention programs in Ghana. In this study, therefore, the primary data on political corruption was based on the research participants' accounts of political corruption cases experienced, heard or observed in Ghana. On the other hand, the secondary data sources include Auditor-General and commission of inquiry reports, findings from investigative journalism, the African Afrobarometer survey reports, observations of anti-corruption organizations and academic papers regarding acts of political corruption in Ghana.

4.3. Private Mass Media

There were indigenous means of disseminating information – including the use of the *gong-gong*⁵ beater who delivered a message from the chief to the community – before the introduction of the traditional mainstream media, such as the radio and newspaper in Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the colonial era (Ayensu, 2003; Kusters, 2012). The evolution of the mass media in the contemporary sense of traditional mainstream media, such as the newspaper, television and radio in Ghana, however, dates back to the colonial era in the then Gold Coast. First published in 1822, the Royal Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer were the first newspapers. Sir Charles McCarthy, the British colonial governor at the time, established the Royal Gold Coast Gazette to be the official government paper (Alhassan, 2005; Dzisah, 2008; Karikari, 2017; Twumasi, 1981).

Following the establishment of the first newspaper by the colonial government, the indigenous peoples also established privately-owned newspapers (Alhassan, 2005; Dzisah, 2008; Twumasi, 1981) Charles and Edmund Bannerman, for instance, set up the first private newspaper the *Accra Herald* in 1857. Other private newspapers that the indigenous created and run included the *Gold Coast Times* (1874), the *Gold Coast Independence* (1885), the *Gold Coast Chronicle* (1890), the *Gold Coast People* (1891) and the *Gold Coast Express*. These newspapers became nationalist mouthpieces that convinced the colonial government to pass the first press law, the *Newspaper Registration Ordinance* of 1893, to control the press (Dzisah, 2008).

In the 1950s, the two political organizations fighting for independence established their newspapers. Kwame Nkrumah (the leader of the Conventional People's Party) introduced the

⁵ The *gong gong* is a purposely-designed piece of metal that a chief's messenger beats to attract the attention of the community before announcing or delivering the news.

Accra Evening News, the *Sekondi Morning Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*. On the other hand, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) launched its newspapers including the *National Times* and *Talking Drums*. Following independence, the CPP government bought the *Daily Graphic* in 1962 and turned it into a government paper (Twumasi, 1981).

Concerning the electronic mass media, Sir Arnold Hodson (the British colonial governor of the then Gold Coast) established the first radio station in 1935. This radio station later became *Ghana Broadcasting Corporation* after independence, and the first national television station (the GTV) was introduced in 1965 (Alhassan, 2005). Following the liberalization of the media and the subsequent steady development of the private mass media in Ghana's fourth republic beginning in 1993, the mass media landscape has been dramatically transformed (Karikari, 2017).

Historically, the privately-owned mass media have played a crucial role in the fight for independence and freedom, the protection of national resources and the security and welfare of the people (Alhassan, 2005; Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Arthur, 2010; Asare, 2009; Dzisah, 2008; Karikari, 2017; Twumasi, 1981). Additionally, the literature elsewhere also indicates that the private mass media mostly play a critical watchdog role over government to ensure accountability compared to the state-owned media (McQuail, 2010; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016; Stapenhurst, & O'Brien, 2000). Srivastava (2016), for example, shows that private mass media in India have contributed to addressing political corruption through investigative reporting.

Against this background, this study has focused solely on the traditional privately-owned mass media to investigate whether they have contributed to addressing political corruption in Ghana. Other reasons for selecting private mass media include the historical transformation of the private mass media landscape because of the media liberalization in Ghana's fourth republic (National Communication Authority, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) and the lack of in-depth research examining private media's role in political corruption. This research has, therefore, concentrated on the mainstream private mass media, such as television, newspapers and radio in Ghana. These media also include limited online media outlets and reports that are an integral part of the traditional mainstream private media in the country.

4.4 Study Setting

South of the Sahara, Ghana became the first African country to gain independence from the United Kingdom on March 6, 1957. Located in West Africa, the country occupies 227,533 square kilometers of land and 11,000 square kilometers of water (World Atlas, 2015, p. 1). As Figure two

illustrates below, it shares land borders with Togo, Burkina Faso and Cote D'Ivoire (World Atlas, 2017).

Figure 4.1. A map of Ghana



Source: Nsikan, 2017

Based on the 2010 Population and Housing Census, Ghana has a total resident population of 24,658,823, which consists of 12,024,845 males (about 49 percent) and 12, 633,978 females (nearly 51 percent) (Ghana Statistical Services, 2012, p. 1-2). The country's current population is, however, now estimated to be 29,375,668 (World Population Review, 2018). Christians represent 71 percent and Muslims 17 percent of the Ghanaian population (World Population Review, 2018). Ghana is a multi-ethnic country. The major ethnic groups include Akan (47.5%), Dagbani (17%), Ewe (14%), Ga-Adangbe (7%), Gurma (6%), Guan (4%), Gurunsi (2.5%) and Bissa (1%). (World Population Review, 2018). English is the official language, and there are about 80 indigenous languages spoken throughout the country (World Atlas, 2017).

The 2010 Population and Housing Census also provides the recent literacy statistics on Ghana's population. According to this Census, the literate population of Ghana, based on persons who are at least 11 years of age, stand at 74.1 percent (12,892,787) against 25.9 percent (4,500,068) representing the non-literate population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p. 58). The literate population of females stands at 68.5 percent (6,210,731) while the non-literate female population is 31.5 percent (2,851,594) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p. 59). In contrast, 80.2 percent of males (6,682,056) are literate while 19.8 percent (1,648,474) are not (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p. 60). Also, the primary school enrolment comprises 710,024 females and 3,099,234 males (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012, p. 2). Based on the 2009-2010 academic session, the junior high school enrolment is 611,276 for females and 690,664 for males (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012, p. 1). These statistics indicate that males have greater access to education than their female counterparts, although females slightly outnumber males (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Ghana's Gross Domestic Product in 2017 was 42.69 billion USD, which represents 0.07% of the world's economy (Trading Economics, 2018). Agriculture, the backbone of the country's economy, employs approximately 60 percent of the population and contributes 40 percent to the GDP (Ghana Statistical Services, 2012). Ghana's major exports include gold (\$9.7B), cocoa beans (\$2.4B), crude petroleum (\$1.15B), sawn wood (\$426) and coconuts, Brazil nuts and cashews (\$1B) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2016, p. 1). The country's top imports include cars (\$848M), rice (\$575M), refined petroleum (\$557M), delivery trucks (\$502M), and cement (\$380M) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2016, p. 1).⁶

Given the oscillation between civilian and military rule since independence until the current constitutional democratic rule, Ghana has had a chequered political history. In 1960, Ghana became a republic, with Kwame Nkrumah as the first president (Government of Ghana, 2017). In 1966, when President Nkrumah was on an official state visit to China, the military took over the reins of government in a coup and formed the National Liberation Council (NLC) led by Brigadier Akwasi Afrifa and Lieutenant-General Joseph Arther Ankrah (Watkins, Valley, & Alley, n.d.). In 1969, Abrefa Busia of the Progress Party became the prime minister after his party won the national elections in the second republic (Government of Ghana, 2017; News Ghana, 2017). In 1972, the military torpedoed the second republic and formed a National Redemption Council, with Colonel Ignatius Acheampong as the head of state (Government of Ghana, 2017; News Ghana, 2017). In June 1979, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings successfully staged a coup and formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (ARFC) to tackle corruption and restore justice. In September 1979, the ARFC handed over power to Hilla Limann of the Convention People's Party (CPP), which won the national elections. In December 1981, Rawlings seized state power in a military coup that ended the third republic. In 1993, Ghana returned to multi-party constitutional rule (News Ghana, 2017; Watkins, Valley, & Alley, n.d.).

Corruption has been one of the major catalysts for the military takeovers. In 1979, for example, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (ARFC), led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, executed three former heads of state (Akuffo, Acheampong and Afrifa) and five top military officers on corruption charges (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014). Political corruption, however, has characterized almost every form of political arrangement—whether democratic or

⁶ The amounts quoted may vary from year to year.

military rule—which Ghana has witnessed since independence in 1957. Uncontrolled [political] corruption, alongside economic challenges, has been one of the major drivers of the military overthrow of constitutionally elected governments (Government of Ghana, 2017; News Ghana, 2017; Watkins, Valley, & Alley, n.d.). The problem of persistent political corruption has also been one of the catalysts for a change of government through the ballot box in the fourth republic (Rawlings, 2017; Short, 2017; Thompson, 2017). The ordinary Ghanaian people rightly expect governments in the fourth republic to aggressively embark on necessary anti-corruption reforms to curb corruption and address economic challenges in the country.

Despite the people's expectations, Ghana has struggled to deal with the problem of corruption in the fourth republic as the country loses an estimated amount of four billion US dollars to corruption annually (Ofori-Atta, 2017). Ghana has not made any significant inroads in fighting corruption, given the country's scores of 43 in 2016, 47 in 2015, 48 in 2014, 46 in 2013, and 45 in 2012—with each score out of 100, where a higher score closer to 100 indicates less corruption (Transparency International, 2016). The Voice of the People survey also indicates that 92% of respondents reported that corruption is a serious problem (Ghana Integrity Initiative, 2011). As well, the 2014 Afrobarometer survey report shows that 76% of respondents state that corruption has increased while 71% reported that the government had performed poorly in fighting corruption in the country (Armah-Atttoh, 2014).

The parliamentary oversight of the executive to help protect the public purse has been mostly ineffective (Global Integrity Report, 2016; Prempeh 2016). According to the Heritage Foundation (2016), a US-based think tank, Ghana is losing the battle against corruption. The government's inability to decisively commit to tackling persistent political corruption suggests that funds earmarked for social intervention programs to help alleviate the hardships of the poor are unlikely to reach the target beneficiaries (Global Integrity Report, 2016; Manteaw, 2016; Thompson, 2016).

As part of anti-corruption measures, the global anti-corruption community emphasizes the role of free and independent mass media to contribute to transparency and accountability via media reporting on corruption (Coronel, 2008; Stapenhurst, 2000; Srivastava, 2016). This media reportage is intended to educate Ghanaians, build a robust anti-corruption culture and exert pressure on the political leadership to be committed to genuine anti-corruption reforms.

In the Ghanaian context, it is important to note that the mass media had played a mixed role since the struggles for independence when it was principally a freedom fighter. For most of the postcolonial histories of the country, however, the political climate of the nation has often shaped the role of the mass media as a lap dog,⁷ guard dog⁸ or watchdog (Akumey-Affizie, 2012). In the military regimes, for example, the mass media tended to be a lapdog given the hostile relations between the media and government (Aikins 2013; Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Arthur, 2010).

These regimes typically failed to recognize, tolerate and promote media freedoms and the freedom of expression in general that resulted in silencing government critics. The Provisional National Defense Council government, for instance, introduced a repressive *Newspapers Licensing Law* in 1985 that ushered in a culture of silence (Asibuo, n.d.; Dzisah, 2008). In some cases, media personnel were arrested and imprisoned for being too critical of the government (Asibuo, n.d.). In such a political milieu, the mass media institutions understandably could not play an adequate watchdog role due to security and safety concerns.

Ghana's transition to civilian rule in 1992 has drastically changed the mass media landscape following the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution. This constitution paved the way for the liberalization of the media in the country. Chapter twelve of the 1992 Constitution safeguards the freedom and independence of the press and stipulates the constitutional responsibilities of the media. Article 162 (5) of the 1992 Constitution states the following:

All agencies of the mass media shall, at all times, be free to uphold the principles, provisions, and objectives of this Constitution, and shall uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people of Ghana. (Republic of Ghana, 1996, p. 87).

This provision recognizes and empowers the media to hold government officials in check.

Since Ghana's return to democratic governance in 1992, both the electronic (television, radio and the internet) and the print (newspapers) media have seen exponential growth. The print media now exceeds 300 in the country (Arthur, 2010, p. 25). The number of registered FM radio broadcasting stations is 481, out of which 345 are private (Freedom House, 2018) while the number of authorized television broadcasting stations is 93 (National Communication Authority, 2017a,

⁷ The mass media is overly submissive to the political authority for fear of persecution.

⁸ The mass media is supportive of the regime with occasional criticism of individual members.

2017b, 2017c). The state controls *Ghana Broadcasting Corporation*, the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Ghanaian Times*. The rest of the print and electronic media is all privately owned (Arthur, 2010). More recently, the Internet media has also been expanding and gaining popularity for online-news transmissions (National Communication Authority, 2017b). Overall, current media statistics point to an astronomical growth of the privately-owned mass media in the country (in an unprecedented fashion in the history of the nation).

Alongside the remarkable rise of mass media institutions, there have been rampant cases of political corruption amidst austerity measures rendering critical healthcare infrastructures underfunded and attendant high maternal and infant mortalities (Boateng, 2017). This juxtaposition of media growth, corruption and deprivation has motivated me to investigate the media's role in Ghana. Aside from this personal motivation, the mixed empirical observations and the ongoing theoretical debate on the mass media's role in emerging democracies have provided a scholarly motivation for studying the Ghanaian case to address one specific question: "To what extent have the mass media institutions contributed to resolving or aggravating the problem of political corruption involving members of the executive arm of government since 2001 when Ghana repealed the criminal libel law?"

A critical examination of the Ghanaian case is likely to make an insightful contribution to informing the theoretical and policy debates surrounding the mass media's role in the field of anti-corruption research for several reasons. These reasons include the promises of successive governments to address political corruption since 1992, the growing concern about the increasing rate of political corruption and the constitutional recognition that the mass media is the fourth estate, and, as a result, has a role as a watchdog. Other reasons are the constitutional guarantee of press freedom and independence, the legal protection of the freedom of expression, the proliferation of the mass media and the recognition of Ghana as a beacon of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa (Bekoe & Buchard, 2012; Global Integrity Report, 2016). Using the Ghanaian case, I am curious to investigate whether the mass media play any constructive role in the global fight against corruption (African Union, 2004; Srivastava, 2016; United Nations, 2004).

4.5 The Qualitative Research Approach

This section explains the qualitative research design, reviews its principles and discusses the extent to which this study applies these principles (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research approach is more suited than other approaches for investigating a complex topic like corruption as it offers the

participants the opportunity to narrate their stories as informed by their lived experiences or observations (Creswell, 2013; Lanier & Briggs, 2014; Silverman, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln explain the advantages of qualitative research this way:

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – a case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview, artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005. p. 4).

This definition emphasizes the subjective and multi-dimensional nature of qualitative research and the use of different sources of empirical data needed to broadly capture multi-faceted social reality as constructed and perceived by insiders. This study draws on both primary and credible secondary data sources to examine the insiders’ perspectives and shared meanings about the research problem.

Similarly, a qualitative approach involves a search for profound meanings and the underlying forces of social phenomena from the viewpoints of relevant social actors. According to Holloway (1997), “Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live” (p. 2). This insight underscores the need to capture the relevant social actors’ experiences and perspectives of particular social phenomena. As Holloway (1997) further argues, “Researchers use qualitative approaches to explore the behavior, perspectives, and experiences of the people they study. The basis of qualitative research lies in the interpretive approach to social reality” (p. 2). The current study uses qualitative research to dig deeper into the perspectives, experiences, attitudes and understandings of the research participants regarding the complex relationship between the mass media and political corruption in Ghana.

Qualitative research provides a broader context within which to situate the research topic for a holistic comprehension. Lanier and Briggs (2014) argue that the purpose of any qualitative study is to “ultimately be able to provide an in-depth and complete understanding of the subject” (p. 109). A qualitative approach encourages varied and multiple voices to be heard in the exploration of social phenomena to reflect its ontological position that social reality is multiple or

multi-dimensional (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Silverman, 2005). This approach is best suited for critical studies such as the current research that aim to dig beneath official narratives of the supposed leadership and media commitment to anti-corruption efforts in order to reveal hidden realities and promote positive social transformation.

A qualitative approach assumes an ontological position of social constructionism, which argues that social actors create social reality. The categories that people use to help them understand the natural and social world are social constructs. This understanding suggests that social actors construct meaning and social phenomena during the process of social interaction. Given this ontological position, a qualitative approach embraces the notion of multiple realities based on social actors' divergent perspectives and experiences (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Lanier & Briggs, 2014). In light of this ontological position, a qualitative approach also assumes an interpretive-epistemological approach, which holds that valid knowledge comes from the subjective experiences and meanings of research participants. Such a qualitative approach intends to report these diverse realities based on insiders' subjective experiences (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2005). The use of open-ended, semi-structured interviews in the current study helped elicit insiders' account of these multiple social realities in the relationship between corruption and mass media.

Interpretivism posits that sound knowledge stems from engaging with participants to gather subjective evidence anchored on people's views, stories, roles, and experiences (Berg, 2012; Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Maxwell, 2009). This interpretivism underlying the qualitative approach suggests that social actors create a social phenomenon or reality. Hence, by using a qualitative approach, researchers bridge the distance or remove the gap between themselves and the research participants; this approach differs from the quantitative method in which "objective separateness" is a precondition for achieving objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 94). Qualitative researchers go to the field, a site where the participants live or work, to obtain firsthand information and to understand the context of the research topic.

Given this interpretivism, the qualitative method is considered appropriate and relevant for the study of political corruption as a socially situated and context-specific problem, which can best be understood based on insiders' worldviews, experiences, shared meanings and beliefs. Based on this insight, the researcher stayed in Ghana for almost three months and immersed himself in Ghanaian society. This immersion paved the way for him to observe happenings regarding

corruption, to witness the media's role and to gather firsthand information about the research problem from participants with varied experiences, expertise, and roles.

Qualitative research strategies have unique strengths in helping the researcher capture and emphasize the context to enable a situated understanding of human behavior and social phenomena. This approach is also useful for understanding social reality through the lenses of insiders and their multiple voices. Moreover, qualitative research allows for flexible research methods to understand social reality as a dynamic process as events and patterns unfold over time (Berg, 2012; Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Maxwell, 2009).

Aside from the context and methodological flexibility, a qualitative approach is suitable for researching social phenomena that are typically undesirable, such as political corruption, and where a sample frame is unlikely to be obtained (Bryman, 2004; Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Oluthwaite & Turner, 2007). These strengths have also informed the decision to use this approach as the most appropriate for the studying of political corruption.

4.5.1 Participants

The target population in the current study comprised Ghanaian people who met the inclusion criteria. The participants consisted of experienced anti-corruption journalists and editors of privately-owned media, media experts, politicians, anti-corruption experts and practitioners, and academics, as well as ordinary university students living in Accra. This target population was selected because the researcher considered that it was well positioned to answer the research questions. The expectation was that the population would supply rich data due to the varied societal roles of the selected individuals, as well as their different expertise and experiences. Haque (2012) writes of the importance of such variety and difference in qualitative research. Any individual who met the specified inclusion criteria, including being a Ghanaian who was 18 or above, and was willing to participate in the study qualified to be recruited.

The participants were residents in the national capital city (Accra) where high-profile corruption scandals often originate since the seat of government is located there. Also, the most influential private media outlets are in Accra. The majority of privately-owned media stations outside Accra feed on these sister stations in the national capital for news bulletin and significant discussions of political issues including political corruption.

The current study recruited qualified participants (informants) possessing the relevant attributes, including roles, expertise, and experiences with the research topic to obtain rich data to

answer the research questions. These research participants came from five main groups as follows: (1) academics in communication and political science fields, (2) independent anti-corruption activists, (3) individuals from political parties, such as ruling and opposition parties, (4) students enrolled in postsecondary institutions to obtain their perspectives, and (5) individuals from private commercial media houses. The use of these categories of information-rich informants facilitated the gathering of in-depth, relevant information to ensure a broad-based comparative analysis on the research topic based on the perspectives of participants from these different categories. As the literature shows, the intentionally selective recruitment of qualified informants is useful in situations in which specific groups, individuals or cases are considered information-rich to help facilitate an in-depth and wide-ranging exploration of the research topic (Lanier & Briggs, 2014; Maxwell, 2009; Neuman & Robson, 2009; Patton, 1990).

Similarly, the privately-owned mass media organizations were categorized into pro-government and pro-opposition groups and those that were relatively neutral. The classification was intended to ensure balanced and nuanced perspectives from the mass media personnel for comparative analysis. This categorization was based on insights from the informants and the researcher's observations of the work of these media organizations, as informed by the available online information.

In the current study, the researcher used three procedures to identify and recruit qualified and interested potential participants to take part in the study. First, the researcher's Ghanaian contacts recommended him to potential participants who could provide rich data on the subject matter of this research because of their unique expertise, role, and experiences in the media's role in Ghanaian political corruption. Those contacted were asked to refer qualified and interested individuals to the researcher by way of distributing recruitment leaflets to the potential participants in their network to contact the researcher. Because the potential Ghanaian participants wanted the researcher to contact them first as a sign of his seriousness in securing appointments for interviews, this approach was somehow ineffective. As a result, the researcher, sometimes, had to look for information online about the potential participants recommended to him for follow-ups and interview appointments.

Second, at the conference organized by Media Foundations for West Africa (Fieldwork, 2017), the researcher also made contacts with some journalists, academics, anti-corruption activists and politicians who also recommended him to other people for interviews. The researcher

screened potential participants who reached out to him to ensure that they met the study criteria. The literature supports these referral procedures for securing potential participants with the requisite knowledge, experience and skills in the research project based on the help and recommendation of those already contacted (Maxwell, 2009; Goodman, 2011).

Finally, the researcher's initial pre-fieldwork review of online media reports on political corruption also helped him to identify prominent Ghanaian investigative journalists, anti-corruption activists, and experts, including academics. The researcher contacted these people when he went to the field and succeeded in interviewing them. In this study, this process of identifying and interviewing participants came to an end after reaching a saturation stage when the participants provided no new information. At this saturation stage, 25 participants had already granted interviews.

4.5.2 Primary Data Collection – In-Depth Interviews

This study used in-depth face-to-face interviews based on an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix A) to gather primary data. Following an ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Committee, 25 in-depth individual interviews were conducted in Accra (Ghana) between September 29 and December 12, 2017. Table 4.1 below shows the socio-demographic details of the interviewees.

Table 4.1. Research participants' socio-demographic characteristics

Participants' pseudonyms	Sex	Age	Education	Occupation
Kwadwo	Male	25-34	Master's Degree	Journalist
Yaw	Male	35-44	Bachelor's Degree	Politician
Akosua	Female	18-24	Bachelor's Degree	Student
Richie	Male	18-24	Bachelor's Degree	Student
Dzifa	Female	55-64	Ph.D.	Professor
Asare	Male	35-44	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist
Kwame	Male	35-44	Master's Degree	Politician
Yaa	Female	35-44	Master's Degree	Journalist
Kwasi	Male	45-54	Master's Degree	Anti-Corruption Activist
Yeboah	Male	18-24	Bachelor's Degree	Student
Ama	Female	18-24	Bachelor's Degree	Student
Agyemang	Male	25-34	Master's Degree	Journalist
Gyan	Male	65-74	Ph.D.	Professor
Fosu	Male	35-44	Ph.D.	Professor

Kwateiwaa	Female	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist
Tagoe	Male	35-44	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist
Abelety	Female	18-24	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist
Quartey	Male	55-64	Master's Degree	Professor
Osei	Male	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist
Ogu	Female	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist
Agyeiwaa	Female	55-64	Ph.D.	Professor
Takyi	Male	45-54	Ph.D.	Anti-Corruption Activist
Ferkaa	Male	55-64	Master's Degree	Politician
Edinam	Female	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	Politician
Kate	Female	18-24	Bachelor's Degree	Journalist

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

These 25 research participants consisted of renowned academics (N=5), anti-corruption activists (N=2), politicians from both governing and opposition parties (N=4), and journalists (N=10), as well as ordinary students (N=4) who met the inclusion criteria. Table 4.2 below summarizes the statistics of the research participants' socio-demographic characteristics

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics of participants' socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic characteristics	Number of participants	Percent
Sex		
Female	10	40
Male	15	60
Total	25	100
Occupation		
Journalists	10	40
Politicians	4	16
Academics	5	20
Anti-Corruption Activists	2	8
Students	4	16
Total	25	100
Education		
Ph.D.	5	20
Master's Degree	7	28
Bachelor's Degree	13	52
Total	25	100

Age		
8-24	6	24
25-34	6	24
35-44	6	24
45-54	2	8
55-64	4	16
65-74	1	4
Total	25	100
Joy FM		
Media Investigations & Follow-ups	10	26.3
Politicians	7	18.4
State Anti-Corruption Bodies	7	18.4
Individuals & Civil Societies	14	36.8
Total	38	100
Peace FM		
Media Investigations & Follow-ups	0	0
Politicians	18	47.4
State Anti-Corruption Bodies	6	15.8
Individuals & Civil Societies	14	36.8
Total	38	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

Forty percent of the 25 participants in this study were women (10) while the remainder (60 percent) were men (15), as Table 4.2 shows. While men dominated the study, women were represented in four out of the five categories of participants – academics, journalists, politicians, and students.

Table 4.2 shows that participants with a bachelor's degree represented fifty-two percent (52%) and dominated the study, followed by those with a master's degree accounting for twenty-eight percent (28%), while twenty percent (20%) represented those with Ph.Ds.

Table 4.2 shows the age of participants in this study. As indicated, the age groups 18-24, 25-34 and 35-44 represented twenty-four percent (24%) each of the participants in this study. The 55-64 age group followed next with sixteen percent (16%), while eight percent (8%) and four percent (4%) represented the age groups of 45-54 and 65-74, respectively. These statistics indicate that the participants of the study came from diverse age groups.

Interview appointments were made through email communications, phone calls and personal contacts with the research participants. The researcher and the potential participants agreed on where and when to have the interviews. The interviews were either conducted at the offices or convenient places of the participants' place of work or educational facility. Only one interview was conducted in the interviewee's home. These interviews were all conducted in the English language since the participants had a sound knowledge of this language and preferred to use it.

Before conducting the interviews, the participants had the opportunity to read the consent forms and ask questions before they finally signed the informed consent forms (see Appendix C). The interviewees were further reminded about the purpose of the study and their rights to refuse to take part in this research or to refuse to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with and to withdraw from the study at any time without losing any of their legally-entitled benefits. Participants were asked questions about media watchdog functions, media anti-watchdog functions, factors that either foster or compromise the media's watchdog role, investigative journalism, and their own thoughts about how to make the media a dominant anti-corruption force.

The semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed into text verbatim based on the informed consent of participants. Each audio-recorded interview was played and listened to on many occasions in an attempt to capture every word that research participants used to ensure accuracy in documenting their true views, experiences and observations. In doing so, the researcher spent five hours on average transcribing each interview verbatim. In many cases where the interviews had lasted more than an hour, a whole day was spent on transcribing into text just one of those interviews. While the transcribing process was tedious, it helped the researcher to familiarize himself with the data for analysis.

The decision to use semi-structured interviews – which involve asking purposive questions on specific issues of interest to elicit responses from participants – was based on the documented unique strengths of this kind of interview. The semi-structured interview allows the researcher and the participants to engage in a dialogue or conversation on the research topic (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009). It also helps the researcher to prepare an interview guide comprising a pre-determined list of relevant topics and questions to ask before the interview takes place (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009). In this study, an interview guide was used to maintain a consistent focus on the research topic during the interview process. This interview guide contained research

questions centered on four central themes derived from theoretical and empirical literature reviews: media watchdog functions, media anti-watchdog functions, structural and agency factors that either promote or undermine the media's watchdog functions, and final thoughts from participants about the best way forward in strengthening the mass media to be a more effective anti-corruption force.

Semi-structured interviews can also help provide comparable and reliable qualitative data through the use of the interview guide (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Warren & Karner, 2005). In this study, research participants were asked virtually the same set of research questions, allowing for a comparative analysis of responses from the different categories of research participants. Another benefit of semi-structured interviews is that they give the participants the freedom to articulate their stories, views, and experiences in their terms about the research topic (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009) as observed in conducting interviews in Ghana

The face-to-face semi-structured interview also affords the researcher an opportunity to probe relevant emerging topical issues during the conversation that may slightly depart from the interview guide (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Warren & Karner, 2005). In this study, the interviewer was able to probe further on pertinent, emerging issues, such as participants' general perception of democracy and accountability in Ghana. This flexibility gave the researcher a deeper contextual understanding of the social, political and economic factors shaping the private mass media's contested watchdog role in the country.

Above all, although this method of data collection is time-consuming, the face-to-face interview enables both the interviewer and interviewee to seek clarifications on points of interest in the course of the interviews (Merriam, 2009; Maxwell, 2009). To elicit correct responses in the course of conducting the face-to-face interviews with the research participants, for example, the investigator had to reframe research questions on several occasions to facilitate participants' better understanding of the questions.

The participants' commitment to the study involved one in-person interview with the researcher that lasted approximately 50 minutes. In line with a narrative approach to qualitative data gathering, participants were asked to tell their stories about political corruption and the media's role based on their subjective experiences, meanings, and reflections in response to the research questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Denzin, 1978; Larnie & Briggs, 2014).

In the interviews, participants were encouraged to use specific empirical examples in their responses to contextualize the issues they were narrating and to give the interviewer an in-depth understanding of their perspectives on the research problem. Berg (2012) and Creswell (2013) argue that the use of such empirical cases allows the investigator to examine a particular bounded real-life issue or episode in greater depth using data from multiple sources, including interviews. Participants were motivated to cite various relevant cases to exemplify the different dimensions of the research problem. These examples facilitated a broader and more holistic understanding.

Securing interviews was often difficult as most participants were either hesitant or busy, but none resisted my research questions during the interview process, although a few asked clarification questions to ensure they understand the questions thoroughly before answering. In one instance, however, Ferkaa⁹ who is a veteran communication expert answered my research question one (1) – “In what ways do you think the private mass media have contributed to the fight against political corruption in Ghana” – with this question: “Have they?” The investigator, therefore, asked a more detailed question: “Have the private media performed any of these roles concerning political corruption in Ghana – agenda-setting, providing a platform for anti-corruption discourse, demanding political accountability, creating awareness and so on?” While Ferkaa answered in the affirmative, she emphasized that a few individual journalists and one multimedia station have notably played these watchdog functions. Ferkaa’s response to that question may not be characterized as resistance. Instead, her response was a reflection of her disappointment in the private media as a whole for failing to contribute meaningfully to the fight against political corruption in the country, as she later confirmed to the investigator in the course of the interview.

On the whole, participants were enthusiastic and passionate about discussing the research topic and sharing their experiences with the researcher. In this study, the semi-structured interview was a significant way of gathering primary data as it provided a two-way communication process in real time that allowed both participants and the researcher to seek further clarifications where appropriate about the research topic.

4.5.3 Primary Data Coding & Analysis

Data coding and analysis are essential components of the qualitative research approach. NVivo Pro eleven software was employed to facilitate the coding and exploration of the primary data

⁹ Ferkaa is the participant’s pseudonym.

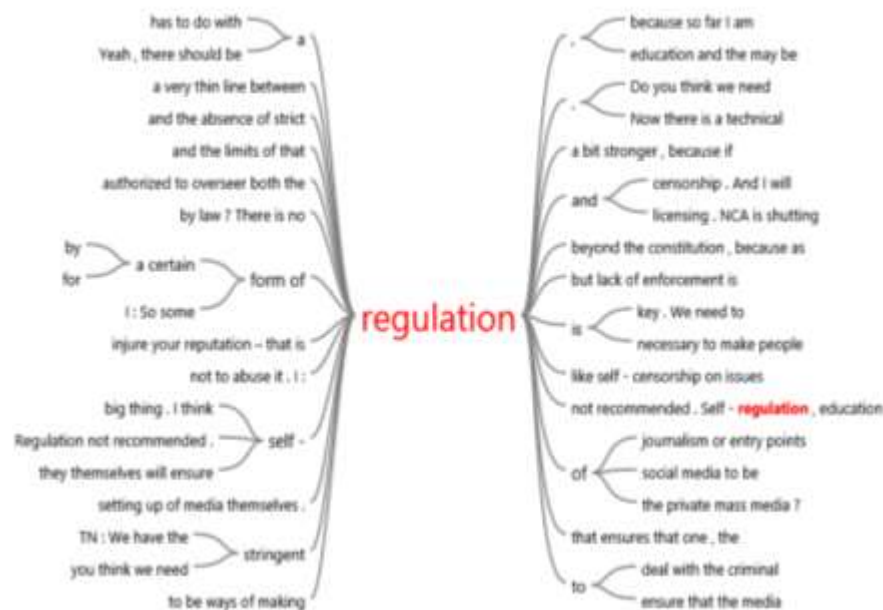
based on the interviews conducted in Ghana. The electronic interview transcript for each research participant was first imported and saved in the NVivo Pro eleven. The data coding and analysis were based on the theoretical lens guiding the study as Madison (2005), and Creswell (2013) recommend. The parent nodes (central themes) and child nodes (sub-themes) – informed by the theoretical framework and the research questions guiding this study (see Figure 1) – were created in the NVivo (Pro eleven) computer software. The overarching themes included (1) media watchdog functions – media contributions to anti-corruption efforts, (2) media anti-watchdog functions – media contributions to the problem of political corruption, and (3) factors promoting media watchdog functions. Other themes were (1) factors supporting media anti-watchdog functions, and (2) the way forward with the measures needed to strengthen the media to be a more effective anti-corruption force.

The sub-themes (child nodes) were created under each parent node (main theme) except theme five (the way forward). Under media watchdog functions, the sub-themes (child nodes) created included exposure of corruption, agenda-setting, a forum for discussion and pressures for accountability and awareness creation and education. Under media anti-watchdog functions, the following child nodes were created: partisan (biased) reporting, propaganda peddling, ownership interests, media corruption and limited investigative journalism and follow-up reporting. Concerning positive factors motivating media watchdog functions, democratic freedoms (free speech, press freedom, media liberalization), media competition, political competition, historical legacies, civil societies, state anti-corruption bodies and other forms of motivation were created as child nodes. Under factors compromising media watchdog functions, the following child nodes were created: political affiliation, ownership interests, lack of professionalism, lack of financial independence, weak media regulation, and poverty and greed.

The existing literature recommends that coding and analysis should cover relevant new emerging themes not captured by the pre-existing categories created from the theoretical framework informing the study (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). The inclusion of these new emerging themes and sub-themes help to develop a real picture of the social reality under investigation. The investigator, therefore, paid attention to these new (sub) themes during the interviewing, transcribing, and coding processes. As a consequence, further parent nodes and child nodes were created in NVivo Pro eleven to capture participants' responses that did not fit

Unlike the *word frequency query* tool, which does not require the investigator to type in any specific word, the *text search query* tool demands particular words be typed in to the search. The specific words of interests – including regulation, poverty, agenda-setting, and money – were used individually to run the text search tool in NVivo Pro eleven to learn more about the contexts in which they were used. Figure 4 presents the results of a text search for a media *regulation*. Clicking on specific words, such as censorship shown in the results above, enabled the researcher to find more information about what participants were saying about regulation. These query tools in NVivo (Pro eleven) made it possible to have a visual representation of the data, and to look for patterns and word relationships to know more about the contexts in which the search words, such as regulation, had been used.

Figure 4.3. Text search query results for the word “regulation”



The actual electronic coding process involved reading every interview transcript and transferring (coding/copying) each participant’s responses to the research questions (including probing questions) into the appropriate parent nodes and child nodes already created in NVivo (Pro eleven). This process enabled the investigator to organize the data for further critical analysis and interpretation. This procedure generally reflects the traditional manual coding process (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). To reiterate, in cases where a participant’s responses to the research questions did not match the existing (sub) themes, new emerging parent and child nodes were created into which such responses were coded as appropriate. As the existing literature

argues (Berg, 2012; Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013), participants' responses were quoted verbatim to support the analysis and interpretation of the research participants' perspectives, and the (sub) themes created in response to the research questions.

Data analysis in a qualitative approach is based on an interpretive framework that assumes "human beings act by the meanings they attribute to their acts and the acts of others" in the processes of social interaction (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p. 11). The role of sociologists is to grasp and make sense of the subjective meanings and thoughts of individuals with the intention of seeing and interpreting the world from their point of view (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). The narrative approach was used to report participants' viewpoints based on the theoretically-driven research questions posed to achieve this goal. As suggested by qualitative research scholars, the purpose of this narrative approach is to help the readership follow and appreciate the participants' subjective stories and viewpoints in their own words (Berg, 2012; Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013). Following the recommendations of Creswell (2013) and Berg (2012), the researcher used appropriate quotes from the interview transcripts to substantiate his narrative report, as well as the interpretation of the participants' subjective experiences and perspectives. As the literature suggests (Berg, 2012; Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Madison, 2005), the investigator used the insights from the integrated theoretical framework, the empirical literature, and contextual understandings obtained during the fieldwork in Ghana to analyze and interpret participants' narratives.

4.5.4 Ethics

Following the required ethics protocol is critical to advancing the safety of respondents and the researcher, as well as the credibility of the final research output (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). The data collection commenced after the appropriate steps had been taken to secure the ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. This study adheres to the prescribed ethical guidelines of this Ethics Board.

The ethical considerations, for example, covered issues surrounding informed consent and confidentiality. One of the ethics requirements is that pseudonyms be used to protect the identity, privacy and safety of research participants (Berg, 2012; Maxwell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). In this study, however, some interviewees wanted the investigator to use their real names for various reasons. First, they argued that they had not said anything that could potentially defame or incriminate any person or group, whether directly or indirectly. Second, they maintained that they

had made the same or similar submissions about the current research topic in the public domain via traditional media and social media platforms without hiding their real identity. Lastly, one participant also argued that hiding participants' identities amounts to corruption. Nevertheless, pseudonyms have been used for all the participants in this study to safeguard their identity, safety and privacy (Berg, 2012; Maxwell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Also, the electronic information comprising the primary data collected and participants' socio-demographic details have been kept in a password-protected laptop and hard copy materials in a locked box to which access has been restricted to the researcher.

Participants were asked to voluntarily sign or give their consent to authorize the use of the data for publication purposes. This informed consent outlined the goal of the project, research strategy, expectations of participants, potential risks and benefits, guidelines for confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation. The participants were frequently reminded that they had the right to withdraw from this study at any point and that their withdrawal from the study would not affect any of their rights – legal, social, political or economic.

4.5.5 Field Experience

I was in Ghana for fieldwork from September 29 to December 12, 2017. Overall, I was able to collect the relevant data needed to answer my research questions. My time in Ghana was both challenging and enjoyable. My first challenge was coping with the heat wave that greeted me upon my arrival at the Kotoka International Airport. Although I was born and bred in Ghana, my four-year stay in Western Canada (Winnipeg and Saskatoon), where the temperature can reach minus 50 degrees celsius in winter made it difficult for me to adjust quickly to Ghana's hot weather. Moreover, the temperature in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, was often over 30 degrees celsius. Unsurprisingly, as I travelled around Accra in *trotro* – the local commercial buses – to conduct interviews, I was usually soaked in sweat.

Aside from adjusting to the heat, the major challenge I confronted was securing interview appointments. Most of the potential participants would neither respond to my emails nor answer my phone calls. When I visited some of these potential research participants at their workplaces, they would often tell me that they would call, but I would return home and wait for days, and sometimes weeks, without hearing from them. So I would call them back, and if I were lucky and they answered my calls, they would just tell me again that they would call me back.

One particularly frustrating and disappointing experience was with a prominent lecturer who, given his academic and research background, I thought might sympathize with a student researcher. To my surprise, this expectation never materialized. After I called this lecturer several times, he asked me to come to his office on a day when he did not have lectures, but, despite my insistence, he would not give me any specific time for the interview meeting. When I turned up on that day, he asked me to wait as he was going to a meeting. I waited for the whole day without obtaining the opportunity to sit with him for my research interview. This situation happened on two separate occasions, so I gave up all hope of interviewing him. In this case, I could not tell whether the fact that I was, as a Ghanaian, an insider and that I also was a researcher was the primary problem. As for the others, and possibly this person, too, their reluctance to see me may have been because they were too busy or because they were unwilling to share their experiences with me.

Notwithstanding these frustrating experiences with securing interview appointments, some participants willingly granted me immediate interviews at their workplace upon my first personal contacts with them. I was particularly impressed with one well-known investigative journalist with whom I initially thought it would be difficult to secure an interview. Surprisingly, when I introduced myself, he granted me a discussion on the same day despite his tight work schedule, as he led me to understand. Many other participants gave me their phone contacts; I called them later, and we successfully arranged and met for interviews. One prominent lecturer invited me, a stranger, to his home for one of the most insightful conversations I have ever had. In general, I enjoyed a warm reception from participants who agreed to grant me an interview. In particular, I was impressed with participants' preparedness and the passion with which they shared their personal experiences, observations, and standpoints regarding the research problem.

Another challenge that I faced was the huge traffic jams in Accra and its surrounding suburbs. To ensure that I did not run out of money while in the field through footing an expensive hotel bill in Accra, I stayed with my aunt in Nsawam, which is located outside the Greater Accra region. The problem with this arrangement was the need to get up around 3:00 a.m. to dodge the heavy traffic jam characterizing the journey from Nsawam to Accra. To avoid traffic jams during my return journey to Nsawam, I had to leave Accra around 2:00 p.m. which was not often possible as sometimes I had interview appointments in the evenings. The journey back to Nsawam was usually marked with approximately four hours of waiting in traffic before I got home.

Aside from the heavy traffic on the Nsawam-Accra road, moving around in Accra between interviews was particularly hectic. To prevent missing interview appointments, I would sometimes ask my taxi driver to stop, so I could take an Okada, a motorbike used for commercial purposes to convey people. Although taking an Okada was dangerous and risky because many were driven by unlicensed drivers, I was sometimes compelled to use one to maneuver through the traffic jam and reach my interview destinations on time. As the appointments were so difficult to obtain, I did not want to miss any, nor did I want to reschedule interviews if I were running late.

Another dilemma I faced was whether to provide interview questions ahead of time. At first, I questioned whether I should provide interview questionnaires to three potential participants who requested the information to help them reflect on the questions and organize their thoughts. However, I granted all such requests as I sensed that failure to do so forfeit my chances of securing an interview. I realized later that it had been a good idea to provide the questionnaires as two of the three participants who had requested them in advance provided compelling and in-depth evidence during the interview process. I think that the prior knowledge of the questions might have helped them to put their thoughts together and gather relevant empirical examples to support their stances, as they had claimed when requesting the interview questions.

During the interview process, I benefited from my own observations and reflections and used them to adjust my actions in future interviews. I observed that taking time to explain the questions and expectations of the participants helped to elicit strong evidence backed by relevant empirical examples. Apart from explaining the questions, I observed that listening to tapes of the interviews on the same day they were conducted and taking notes about key points helped me to reflect on how they went. As well, the key issues that emerged from the interviews helped to make me better at interviewing the next participants. Taking time to reflect on the interviews, as well as considering the best questions with which to probe new emerging themes, made each subsequent interview stronger.

I also appreciated the power of social networks in securing interview appointments with potential research participants. One of my former professors at the University of Manitoba introduced me to a former student from Ghana who now occupies an important executive position in a prominent media organization. This executive media officer introduced me to two of the most crucial people I wanted to interview. As a result of this connection, I obtained immediate

appointments and subsequent successful interviews with these individuals, whom I had been trying to talk to for weeks without success.

This media executive also helped me by inviting me to a critical media conference in Ghana. This conference provided me with a rare opportunity to meet with top media personal and anti-corruption campaigners from across West Africa. At one of the conference sessions on the media's role and democratic accountability, there was a critical discussion on the media's positive and negative contributions, the problems and challenges confronting the press, and the way forward. This session was particularly useful to me as I gathered firsthand information from award-winning journalists from across the West African sub-region on the contested role of the media in ensuring political accountability. The conference also afforded me a unique platform for networking generally, and for meeting and arranging interviews with some of the experienced and award-winning media personnel. As well as providing me with a respite from the stressful experience of securing interviews without social contacts, the conference gave me with a two-day break to enjoy the luxuries of one of Ghana's leading hotels.

To conclude, my field experience was enlightening and enjoyable given my research participants' insightful, in-depth information on the research topic and the warm reception they gave me. On the other hand, it was frustrating and challenging when it came to dealing with the heat wave, the heavy traffic jams, and, particularly, securing interviews appointments. On the whole, I characterize the fieldwork generally as a great success because I obtained the data needed to answer the research questions in the end, and I remained safe throughout the data collection period.

4.6 Secondary Data Collection & Analysis

A literature search was conducted in four phases to gather secondary data on the contested role of the media in the fight against corruption in Ghana and elsewhere from the relevant academic and non-academic sources. The media outlets selected for collecting media reports on corruption included Joy FM and Peace FM. The selection of these two stations was mainly informed by the availability and public accessibility of their electronic news archives and by their popularity and less partisan nature compared with other organizations within the media landscape in Ghana (Modern Ghana, 2009). In phase one, the keywords *transparency*, *accountability*, *corruption*, *bribe/bribery*, *nepotism*, *probe and probity*, *influence peddling* and *whistleblower* were entered into the search tools of these electronic news archives. These keywords due to their rate of

association with media reporting on corruption (Modern Ghana, 2009). The number of times that the keywords appeared in the selected online media archives was used as a proxy measure to document the frequency of the private mass media reportage on corruption. Microsoft Excel 2013 was used to produce relevant charts to facilitate this analysis using visual representations. This data collection was conducted on January 25, 2018.

In phase two, the keywords *political corruption* in Ghana were entered in the Joy FM and Peace FM's online news archives search tool to collect data about media reporting on political corruption only in Ghana. The frequency with which these keywords appeared in the media reports was also used as a proxy measure of the private mass media reporting on political corruption in Ghana. To facilitate this analysis, Microsoft Excel 2013 was used to create charts to display a graphic representation of corruption reporting in the selected media.

In the third phase, 76 news articles from Joy FM and Peace FM (see Appendices D & E) were purposely selected based on their relevance to this study to examine media information sources, and the nature of the media reports concerning political corruption in Ghana.¹⁰ Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show the chosen Joy FM and Peace FM media reports, which were clustered based on the sources of information that informed them. The keywords *political corruption in Ghana*, *GYEEDA* (Ghana Youth Employment Agency), *SADA* (the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority), *the ambulance contract saga*, and *the ford saga*, were entered in Joy FM and Peace FM electronic news archives search tool. New keywords such as *the ford saga*¹¹ were added since most participants in this study mentioned them as examples of recent cases of political corruption in Ghana.

¹⁰ The search was done between May 2 and 10, 2018.

¹¹ The story about the gift of the Ford car, which former President John Mahama received from a Burkinabe contractor, following which he reportedly awarded a contract to the gift giver. Although this saga does not relate directly to social intervention schemes, it gives an idea of alleged cases of corruption at the office of the presidency itself.

Table 4.3. Selected Joy FM news articles categorized based on the sources of information

Politicians	State Anti-Corruption Bodies	Individuals & Civil Societies	Media Invest. & Follow-Ups
Appiah (2016)	Brakopowers (2018)	Ablorh (2015)	Awuni (2014a)
Gadugah (2014)	Gadugah (2016)	Ablorh (2016)	Awuni (2014b)
Gadugah (2017a)	Joy FM (2013)	Afesorgbor (2016)	Awuni (2014c)
Gadugah (2018)	Joy FM (2016a)	Atitsogbi (2015)	Awuni (2014d)
Joy FM (2014)	Joy FM (2017b)	Akwei (2017)	Awuni (2016a)
Mordy (2017)	Joy FM (2018b)	Brakopowers (2016)	Awuni (2016b)
Segebefia (2017)	Joy FM (2018c)	Frinjuah & Appiah (2018)	Awuni (2017)
		Gadugah (2017b)	Joy FM (2016b)
		Joy FM (2017a)	Joy FM (2016c)
		Joy FM (2018a)	Joy FM (2017a)
		Ibrahim (2017)	
		Mordy (2014)	
		Owusu-Ansah (2018)	
		RTI Coalition (2014)	

Table 4.4. Selected Peace FM news articles categorized based on the sources of information

Politicians	State Anti-Corruption Bodies	Individuals & Civil Society	Media Invest. & Follow-Ups
Akomea (2016a)	CHRAG (2014)	Adarkwah-Yiadom (2016)	Nil
Akomea (2016b)	EOCO (2017)	Akwartey (2013)	
Annor (2017)	EOCO (2018)	Amidu (2015)	
Bawumia (2016)	Peace FM (2015e)	Ankomah (2017)	
Djaba (2014)	Peace FM (2016a)	Awuni (2014)	
Fuseni (2014)	Peace FM (2018)	CDD (2018)	
Keglo (2018)		CFA (2013)	
Peace FM (2015b)		GII (2015)	
Peace FM (2015c)		Occupy Ghana (2015a)	
Peace FM (2015d)		Occupy Ghana (2015b)	
Peace FM (2016b)		Owusu (2018)	
Peace FM (2016c)		RTI Coalition (2016)	
Peace FM (2016d)		Send Gh. et al. (2018)	
Peace FM (2017a)		Short (2013)	
Peace FM(2017b)			
Peace FM(2018)			
Quaicoe (2015)			
Sarfo (2018)			

The search in Peace FM and Joy FM's online news archives initially yielded 426 and 487 media articles respectively. Based on nature, purpose and information sources of the private media's reporting on Ghanaian political corruption involving social intervention schemes, these news articles were screened and reduced to 55 for Peace FM and 59 for Joy FM. Table 4.5 summarizes the statistics of the selected news articles for qualitative content analysis. Seventy-six media news articles (38 each from Joy and Peace FM; see Appendixes C and D) between December 2013 and May 2018 were carefully chosen after the researcher skimmed through them to determine those most suitable for the current study. This skimming process involved reading the captions and scanning through the news articles to decide if they were relevant to this study.

The time frame (December 2013 and May 2018) for which the selected media reports covered was also particularly important because of the unique developments characterizing it. These developments centered on the exposure of several cases of high profile Ghanaian political corruption, such as the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority, which resulted in public outrage and civil society's calls for effective responses to control political corruption (Awuni, 2016a; Citizens' Awake Forum, 2013; Ghana Integrity Initiative, 2015; Heritage Foundation, 2016; IMANI, 2014). In qualitative research, since the goal is to contextualize and thoroughly understand a particular social phenomenon to foster a positive social transformation, focusing on historic or unique developments within a specific time framework is critical to achieving this goal (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2005). Seen in this light and as previously explained, the happenings in the period for which the chosen news articles covered were deemed critical to our understanding of the relationship between the Ghanaian media and political corruption.

The selection of 38 articles each from myjoyonline.com and peacefmonline.com indicates that 69% of the relevant 55 articles from Peace FM were selected. On the other hand, 64% of the 59 news articles from Joy FM were also chosen. Unlike quantitative studies that privilege numbers for statistical analysis and generalization, qualitative research emphasizes the depth of relevant information necessary for a holistic understanding of social phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, as this dissertation is mainly qualitative, the carefully selected media reports were considered enough because of their depth of information and relevance to this study in helping build a nuanced picture of the private media's role in Ghanaian political corruption.

Table 4.5. Descriptive statistics of selected media reports on political corruption

Media Stations	Number of News Articles	Percent
Joy FM		
Media Invest. & Follow-Ups	10	26.3
Politicians	7	18.4
State Anti-Corruption Bodies	7	18.4
Individuals & Civil Societies	14	36.8
Total	38	100
Peace FM		
Media Invest. & Follow-Ups	0	0
Politicians	18	47.4
State Anti-Corruption Bodies	6	15.8
Individuals & Civil Societies	14	36.8
Total	38	100

Additionally, as previously indicated, the news articles were strategically chosen to reflect private media reports on specific high-profile cases of political corruption and information sources informing such reportage, as well as the role the Ghanaian private media play in political corruption. In qualitative research, such a strategic gathering of the relevant data is useful in capturing, contextualizing and illuminating complex social phenomena (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2005), such as exploring if the private media play any positive role in Ghana's efforts to control political corruption.

In qualitative studies, the investigator can explore a particular bounded real-life issue or episode in greater depth by using data from multiple sources, including interviews and government and media reports, to expand the analysis and facilitate a deeper understanding of the research problem (Berg, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Consistent with this encouragement for data collection from different sources, this search focused on following up on the cases of political corruption cited by many participants to gather relevant secondary data for enhancing an in-depth analysis and understanding of the research topic. As indicated earlier, the selected media reports are useful in supplementing the primary qualitative data collected from Ghana to build a better understanding of what the Ghanaian private mass media do in practice than when a single data source is used for analysis.

The selected 76 news reports were imported and saved in NVivo Pro eleven and were coded into the appropriate type of information sources – politicians, media investigations and follow-ups, state anti-corruption bodies, and individuals and civil society – which informed the respective news articles. Based on the frequencies of these media information sources. Microsoft Excel 2013 was employed to produce relevant charts to facilitate the quantitative analysis of the origins of the information driving the private media reporting on Ghanaian political corruption. The frequency of the information sources for media reports was used as a proxy measure of the sources from which the private mass media obtain their information to inform their reports. As these media reports were limited regarding sample scope, representativeness and time frame, it may not have been possible to capture the comprehensive picture of the nature, type, trend, and pattern of the media reportage on political corruption in Ghana. As previously discussed, this dissertation uses thematic analysis based on the pre-existing categories drawn from the theoretical and empirical literature as well as the new codes (see section 4.52) that emerged from the 25 interviews conducted in Ghana. In the same way, the qualitative content analysis of the media reports on political corruption was also based on these categories or themes. This qualitative content analysis focused on the thematic examination of the nature of the private media political corruption reporting, such as awareness creation, anti-corruption discourse, agenda-setting and pressure for accountability (Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016; Staphenurst & O'Brien, 2000). As a result, to facilitate analysis and interpretation, the selected articles were further coded into agenda setting, education, the forum for discussing corruption, and pressure for democratic accountability. The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was, therefore, to gather further relevant secondary data for complementing the primary data in building strong arguments about the private media's role in Ghanaian political corruption. The literature supports this kind of qualitative content analysis as part of the broad process of ensuring triangulation in qualitative research (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013).

Phase four saw the collection of data from a wide range of sources, including journal articles, books, anti-corruption laws and decrees, grey literature, the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI), and government reports, such as the Auditor General's findings. Other sources of secondary data included the World Value Survey, Media Foundation for West Africa reports, Afro Barometer surveys, and media reports on political corruption in Ghana, all of which were used to generate descriptive statistics about public opinion on mass media

in general. Microsoft Excel 2013 was used to create relevant charts to graphically show public opinion about media ownership, credibility and reportage based on the reports from the Media Foundations for West Africa and Reporters Without Borders, World Value Survey, and Afro barometer surveys. Also, relevant excerpts from the secondary data were used where necessary to corroborate the qualitative textual analysis in fulfillment of the purpose of triangulation – i.e., whether data from different sources yield different insights and results (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2013). As previously discussed, this review of the relevant existing literature informed the current study and supplemented the field data to ensure triangulation.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has set out the empirical research questions answered in this study. It has also provided a justification for using a qualitative methodology and for including relevant quantitative descriptive analysis to answer the research questions appropriately and comprehensively and to facilitate a better understanding of the research problem. Using semi-structured interviews, primary data was collected in Accra (Ghana) between September 29 and December 12, 2017. Secondary data was gathered from the electronic news archives of Joy FM and Peace FM in two stages. The first phase of this secondary data collection took place on January 25, 2018, using these keywords to guide the search: *transparency, accountability, corruption, bribe/bribery, nepotism, probe/probity, influence peddling* and *whistleblower*. Where the results for a pair of keywords were different, the highest one was picked for analysis. After conducting this search, the frequency of the selected keywords was used as a proxy indicator of media reportage on corruption. The second stage of this data collection was done on March 6, 2018, using *political corruption in Ghana* as keywords. The frequency of the selected keywords following the search was used as a proxy measure of media reportage on political corruption, specifically.

Finally, the keywords *political corruption in Ghana, GYEEDA* (Ghana Youth Employment Agency), *SADA* (the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority), *the ambulance contract saga*, and *the Ford saga* were used to conduct another search between May 2 and 10, 2018. Seventy-six news articles from both Joy FM and Peace FM considered relevant to this study were selected to examine media information sources and the nature of media reports regarding political corruption in Ghana. Also, secondary data from several sources – including the World Value Survey, Media Foundation for West Africa reports, Afro barometer surveys, and media reports on

political corruption in Ghana – was collected to produce descriptive statistics about public opinion on mass media in general. The next chapter discusses media ownership, credibility and reporting.

CHAPTER 5

MEDIA OWNERSHIP, CREDIBILITY & REPORTAGE IN GHANA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents descriptive statistics about the mass media consumption and credibility in Ghana, as well as mass media reportage on corruption. This chapter also introduces the typology of the private mass media using the primary qualitative data collected in Ghana. This typology provides insights into who owns the private mass media and how ownership characteristics affect the watchdog role of the private mass media.

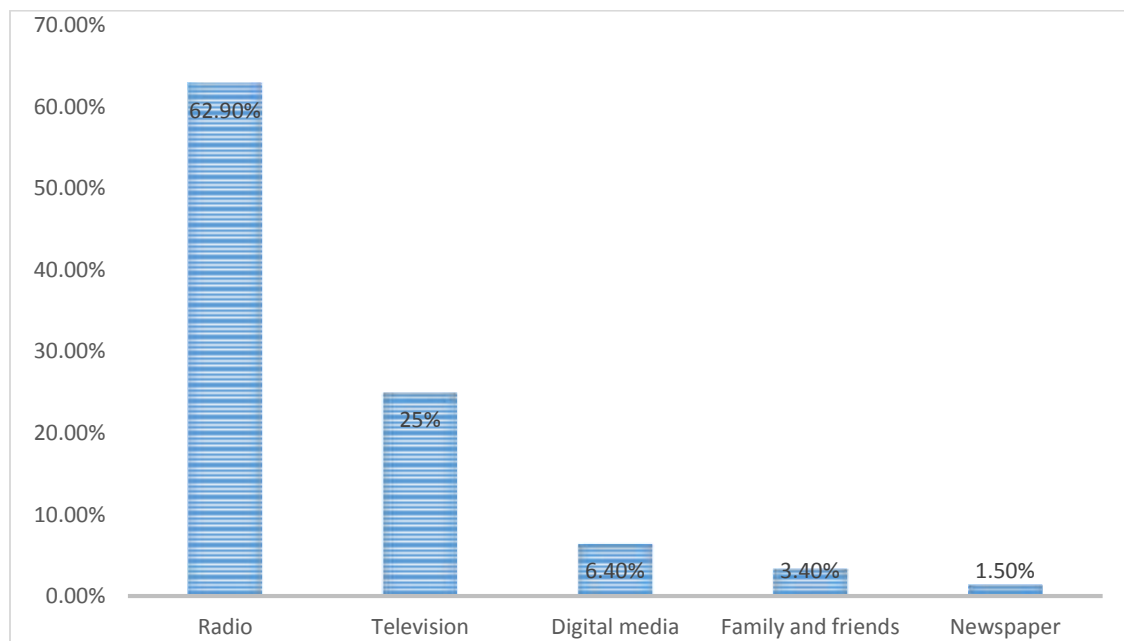
5.2 Mass Media Consumption & Credibility

In Ghana, the state-owned newspapers dominate the print media with a readership of 75% (i.e., three out of four readers prefer state-run papers) while private companies have the most significant share of the electronic or broadcast media. The top four private television stations have an audience of 77% of the total television and radio market. The Despite Group of Companies and Multimedia having the highest share (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018a).

Holding 62.9% of the news market, the radio is the most popular source of news, followed by television with 25% and online media with 6.4%, as Figure 5.1 shows below. Family and friends follow with 3.4%, and at the bottom of the ranking is the newspaper at 1.5% (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018a). Overall, the print media (newspapers), with the lowest audience, is the least-liked source of information for Ghanaians. Some people might prefer, for example, to go online to read rather than buying newspapers due to the availability of online graphics, such as *Graphic Online*.¹² This possible shift might be the reason the online media represents 6.4% of the audience compared to 1.5% for the print media (newspapers).

¹²There is no subscription fee; internet access is all that is required (see <https://www.graphic.com.gh/>).

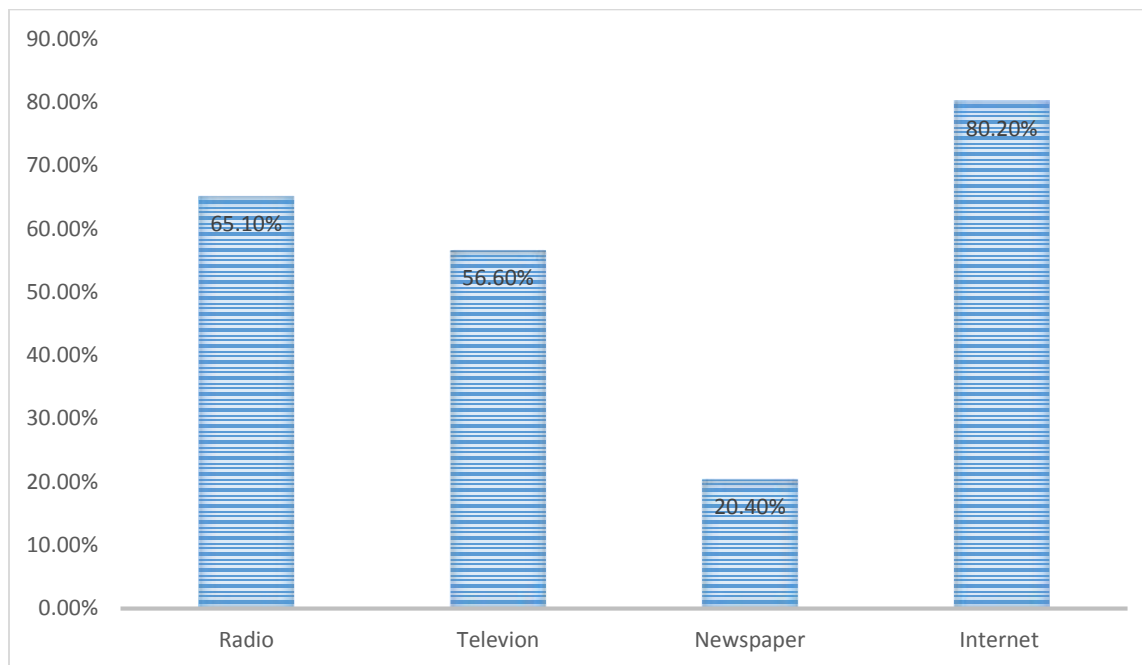
Figure 5.1. Public perception about the most popular sources of news in Ghana



Source: Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018a

Figure 5.2 below presents information about the reach of mass the media in Ghana. As shown, the Internet, with 80.2%, has the most extensive media reach, followed by the radio with 65.1%, television with 56.6% and newspapers with 20.4% (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018a). These results indicate that the Internet is the most accessible form of mass media in Ghana followed by the radio, television and print media. Unlike radio and television, Internet media enables most people to use their phones to access online news from anywhere, although the Internet service is expensive and sometimes erratic or bad (Fieldwork, 2017). In particular, the Internet has expanded the reach of mainstream media with electronic interactive platforms and online news streaming. Today, several traditional mainstream private media outlets, such as Joy FM and Peace FM, have online-news transmission services, enabling listeners to access them within or outside their standard or normal operating frequency zones (Fieldwork, 2017).

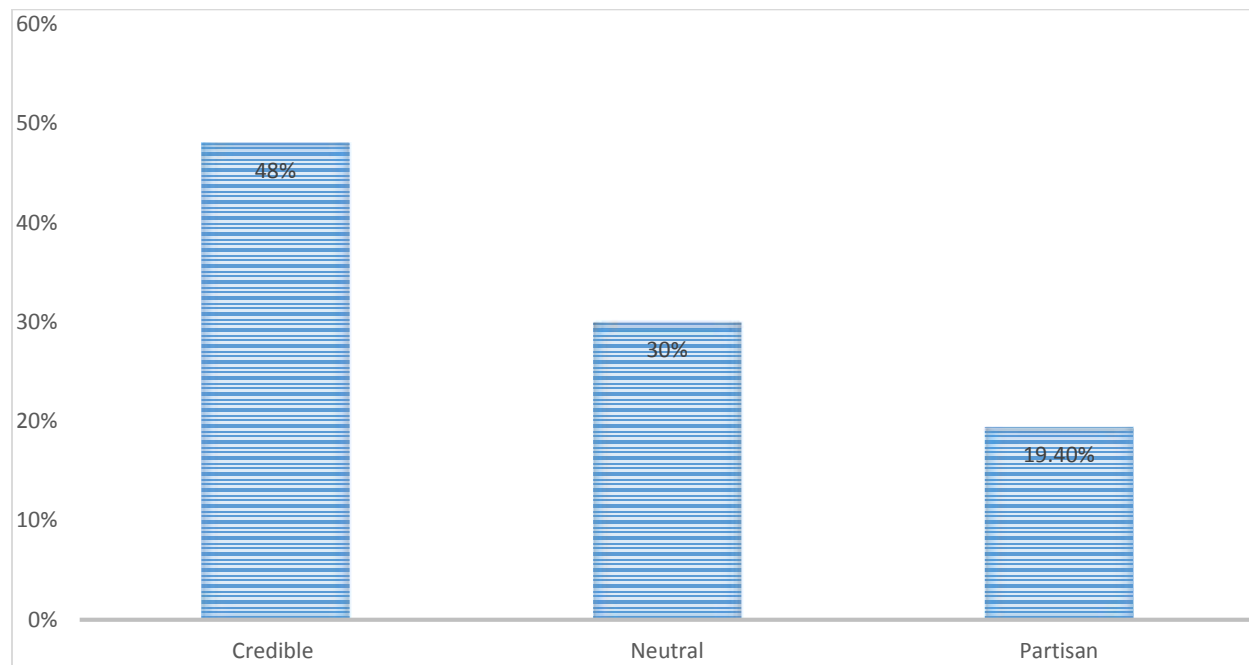
Figure 5.2. Mass media reach in Ghana



Source: The Reporter Without Borders & Media Foundations for West Africa, 2017a

As Figure 5.3 below shows, 48% of respondents perceived the radio as credible while 30% believed that the radio is neutral (The Reporter Without Borders & Media Foundations for West Africa, 2018a). More than 19% of respondents, however, indicated that the radio is partisan (see Figure 4 above). As the result indicate, a little more than a quarter of the population believe that the radio is unbiased in its reportage, suggesting that some radio operators are not adhering to the professional standards including impartiality regarding journalistic reporting. Also, one-fifth of the population believe that the radio is politically affiliated, suggesting that those politically aligned media stations advance their political party interests to the detriment of fighting political corruption. Previous research shows that politically affiliated private mass media do not positively contribute to anti-corruption efforts (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Pablo, 2004; Vaidya, 2005). While nearly half of Ghanaians have confidence in the radio, the remainder of the population do not. Media corruption and partisanship reporting that do not augur well for proper anti-corruption efforts to advance and safeguard public interests in Ghana may account for this finding.

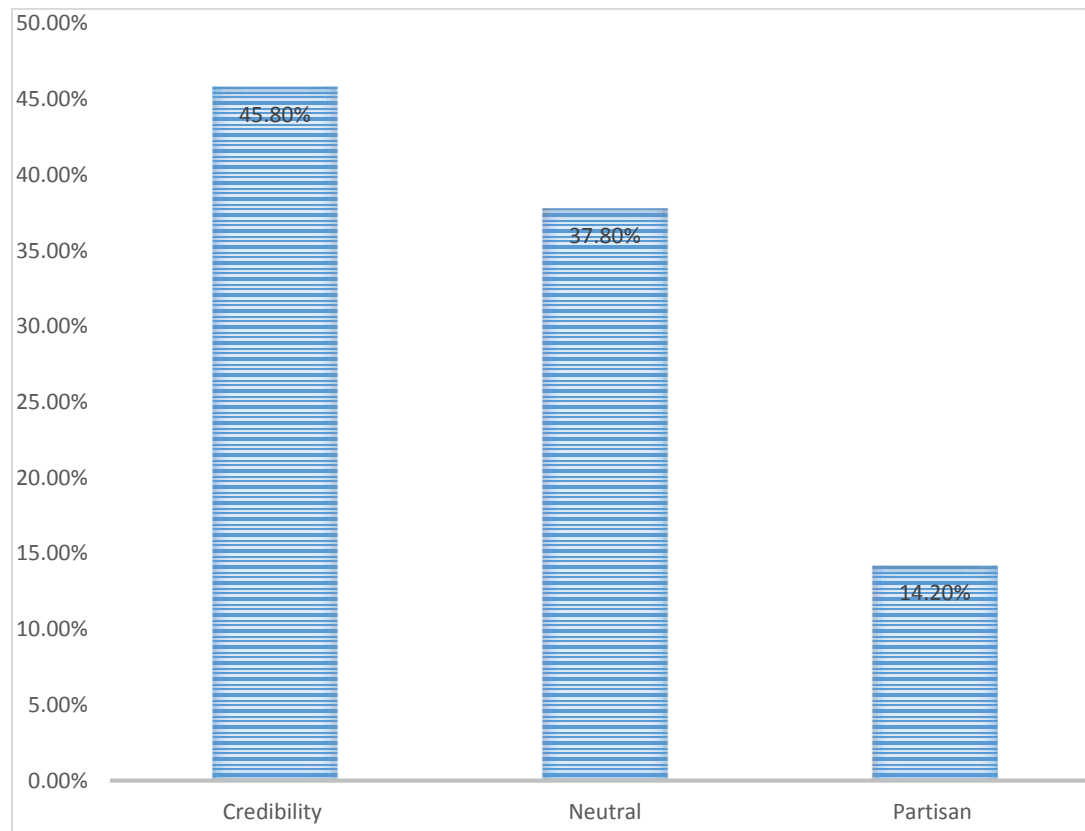
Figure 5.3. Public perception about radio in Ghana



Source: Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2017a

On the other hand, as indicated in Figure 5.4, 45.8% of the media audience perceived the television as credible, 37.8% as neutral and 14.2% as biased (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018a). These results indicate that close to half of Ghanaians have confidence in the television. However, a little more than one-third of the population believe that the television is objective in its reporting. This result indicates that there is still much room for improvement in upholding the professional journalistic principle of objectivity, as required of journalists and media houses (Gadzepko; 2008; McQuail, 2010; Sowumu et al., 2010; Srivastava, 2016). Also, less than one-fifth of the population believe that television stations have a political affiliation. This political affiliation compromises objective reporting as previously discussed.

Figure 5.4. Public perception about television in Ghana



Source: Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018a

The World Value Survey provides another source of data on whether Ghanaians have confidence in the media. In this World Value Survey (2015), respondents were asked to indicate how much confidence they have in the press. A total of 60.94% of respondents (N=1552) reported that they have faith in the media, with 73% of respondents indicating that they have confidence in the television (World Value Survey, 2015). These results contradict those of Media Foundations for West Africa and Reporters Without Borders (2017a), which reported that about half of the population consider the media credible. The time difference may account for these variations given that the findings by Media Foundations for West Africa and Reporters Without Borders are more recent and more likely to reflect the current public opinion about the trustworthiness of the media in Ghana today than those in World Value survey.

In the Afrobarometer (Round 6) survey, respondents were asked to indicate if the news media is active or not in revealing government mistakes and corruption. Combining responses for “somewhat effective” and “very effective,” 73.7% of respondents (N=2400) believed that the

media is doing well in exposing corruption and mistakes within government (Afrobarometer, 2018). The main limitation of these results is that corruption, as defined in the Afrobarometer survey, includes all categories of public sector corruption – not only political corruption, which is at the center of this research. In the same study (Afrobarometer Round 6 survey), the respondents were asked to indicate how often they think the news media abuse their freedoms by writing or saying things that they know are untrue to which 47.8% (N=2400) reported that the news media had abused its freedoms (Afrobarometer, 2018). This result suggests that almost half of the population believe that the news media are not credible sources of information which suggests that some media have deviated from professional journalistic standards, including truthful and non-partisan news reportage as required (Gadzepko; 2008; McQuail, 2010; Hatchen, 1992; Sowumu et al., 2010). This result confirms previous findings in Ghana (Gadzepko; 2008; Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2017a)

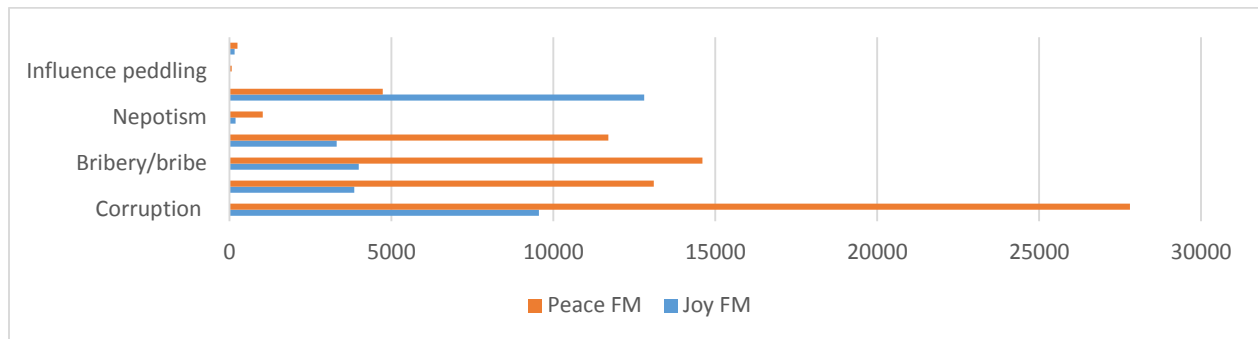
Regarding media ownership and management, men outnumber women. Only two women are either media organization managers or owners. One-third of the private media has known ties to political parties (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2017b). This political connection tends to undermine the independence of these media outlets, making it less likely that they will unearth cases of corruption committed by the members of the political parties to which they are affiliated. In Ghana, political funding of media is high (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2017b), suggesting a political control over news content of private mass media that benefit from this funding. This secondary data finding is consistent with participants' responses on the same subject. This lack of financial independence has subjected the media to political influences and control including co-option. The primary limitation of these findings is that they do not differentiate between private and state-owned mass media. Despite this shortcoming, the results have provided an overall picture of what citizens think about the mass media.

5.3 Mass Media Reportage on Corruption

Secondary data were obtained from the online news archives of Joy FM and Peace FM to provide a rough picture of media reportage on corruption generally and political corruption in particular. The investigator used the frequencies of selected keywords as a proxy indicator of the media reportage on corruption. These keywords include *transparency*, *accountability*, *corruption*, *bribe/bribery*, *nepotism*, *probe/probity*, *influence peddling* and *whistleblower*, which

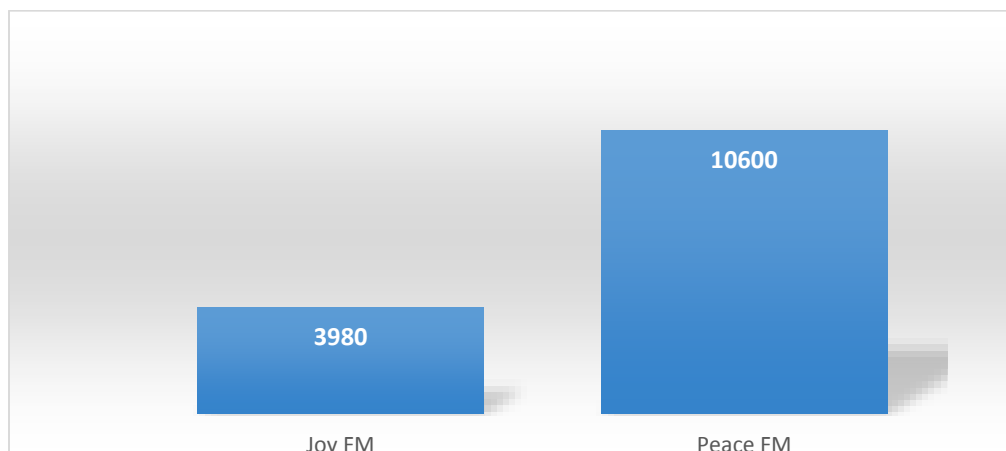
guided the literature search. Where the results for two similar words were different, the highest one was picked for analysis. Figure 5.5 shows the number of times that these keywords appeared in media reports by Peace FM and Joy FM.

Figure 5.5. Frequency of mass media reportage on corruption



In addition, the researcher entered the keyword *political corruption in Ghana* in the Joy FM and Peace FM's online news archives search tool. The results show that political corruption appeared more frequently in Peace FM's media reports than those of Joy FM (see **Figure 5.6**).

Figure 5.6. Media coverage of political corruption in Ghana

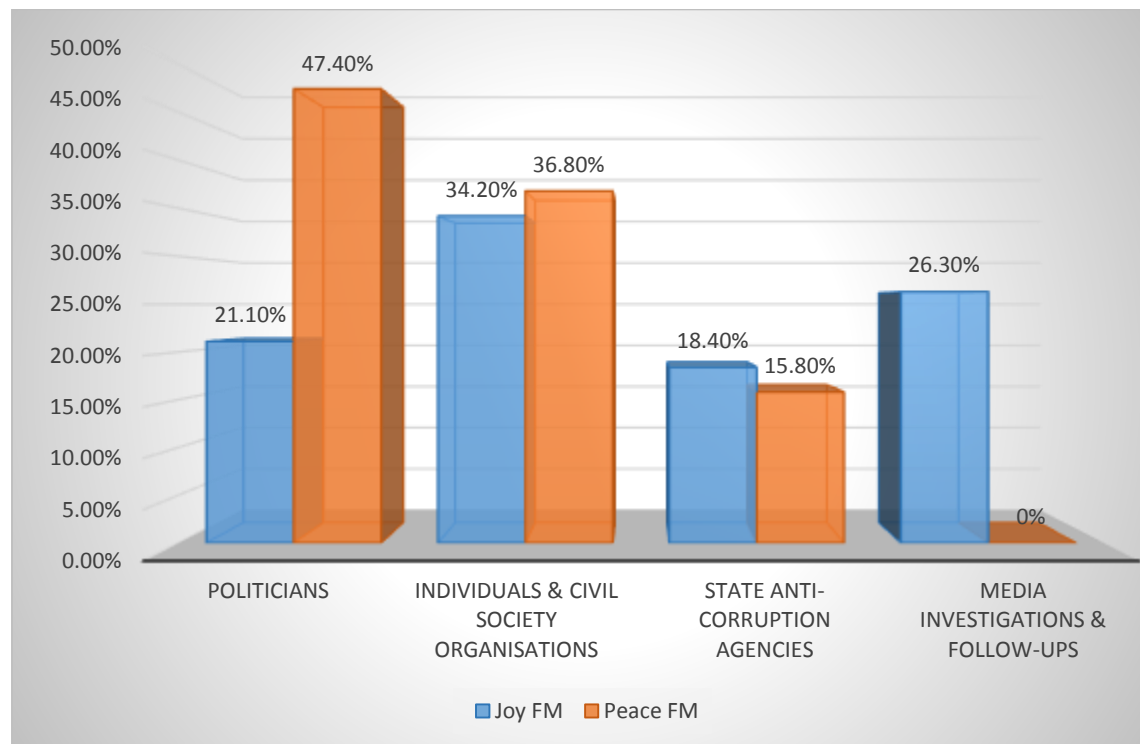


Overall, the results show that Peace FM has the most coverage of corruption-related cases. These results might indicate that corruption is covered in the popular political show hosted by Kwame Sefa Kai every morning with people from the two main leading political parties. Peace FM's greater coverage of corruption might also stem from time-frame differences for when each of these radio stations began online news archives. The results discussed generally demonstrate that the private media have been reporting on political corruption.

The selected 76 Joy FM and Peace FM media news articles – 38 from each station – which aired between December 2013 and May 2018 were used to examine the purpose of media reports on political corruption and the information sources driving such reports in Ghana. The keywords *GYEEDA* (Ghana Youth Employment Agency), *SADA* (the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority), *the ambulance contract saga*, *the ford saga* and *political corruption in Ghana* were used to guide the selection of these news reports.

Figure 5.7 below presents the information sources of Joy FM, and Peace FM reports on political corruption as a proxy indicator of the nature and drivers of the private media reporting on executive corruption. First, the results indicate that some private mass media largely depend on politicians for corruption-related information for their media reports. As Figure 5.7 shows, 47.40% of Peace FM reports on political corruption are based on information that politicians (both in power and opposition) supply concerning political corruption compared to only 21.10% of Joy FM reports. These results shows that much of the information informing Peace FM reports comes from allegations and counter-allegations of political corruption between pro-government and pro-opposition political figures. The information relates to the governing political party's professed claim to be fighting political corruption while opposition parties criticize the government for its lack of commitment in addressing the problem and propose alternative anti-corruption measures (e.g., Akomea, 2016a; Appiah, 2017; Owusu, 2018; Segbefia, 2017).

Figure 5.7. Information sources of media reporting on political corruption in Ghana



The media should do their investigations to inform the discussions surrounding political corruption as politicians may be economical with the truth in their statements to protect their parties' image to win public support regarding electoral fortunes for their parochial interests (e.g., Amidu, 2015).

Figure 5.7 above also suggests that the private mass media overly rely on information from other sources – including individuals, civil society organizations politicians, and state anti-corruption bodies – without conducting investigations and research to inform their political corruption reporting. As Figure 5.7 further confirms, 26% of information sources for Joy FM's political-corruption reporting is generated from its investigative journalism and investigative follow-up reporting on political corruption compared to Peace FM's zero percent score. This observation appears to confirm the interview findings that many private media houses, including the Peace FM, do not have an investigative department to inform political corruption reporting and generate the needed momentum for addressing the problem as the anti-corruption literature suggests (Rajak, 2014; Staphenurst & O'Brien, 2000). One investigative journalist in this study put it this way:

Well, a lot of them do not have an investigative desk. The day-to-day reporting often relies on findings by the Auditor General, and when it is discussed at the parliament's public accounts committee hearing, that is when the media feeds on them or once in a while when a document gets leaked or something like that. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

As the analysis of investigative media reports on political corruption indicates, this excerpt confirms the claim that investigative journalism is limited in Ghana.

This finding is consistent with qualitative results showing that [Joy] Multimedia Group Limited has largely spearheaded investigative journalism concerning political corruption in Ghana. One student participant backed up this argument:

To the best of my knowledge, the Joy Multimedia has taken the lead in investigating political corruption. A case in point is the former President Mahama's ford saga, which was exposed by Manasseh of Joy Multimedia. Manasseh also exposed the GYEEDA saga.¹³ (Yeboah, November 3, 2017).

In highly corrupt countries, such as Ghana, investigative and follow-up reporting on political corruption is indispensable in generating hard-core evidence because it can stimulate public outrage against corruption and create pressure for a stronger political commitment to anti-corruption efforts (Gray 2015; Rajak, 2014; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). Thus, it is troubling to find this kind of reporting is so limited in Ghana.

In addition to demonstrating the paucity of reporting on political corruption in Ghana, the results also demonstrate that it is the private media that is providing coverage for anti-corruption activities and utterances of individuals and civil society organizations. As Figure 5.7 shows, nearly 37% of information sources for Peace FM reports on political corruption emanate from individuals and civil society organizations compared to Joy FM's 34%. This finding indicates that the private media cover the anti-corruption efforts of individuals and civil society, such as educating the public to shun corruption, conducting anti-corruption surveys to drive advocacy, organizing anti-corruption workshops and pressurizing the government to be fully committed to sound anti-corruption reforms (Amidu, 2015, Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), 2015; Occupy Ghana, 2015a; RTI Coalition, 2016; Center for Democratic Development (CDD), 2018). Recently, the private

¹³ GYEEDA was a government-commissioned program to address youth unemployment that became a channel for political corruption in Ghana. Also, ford saga refers to the immediate former President John Mahama's acceptance of a ford by a Burkinabe contractor in breach of gift policy for government officials in Ghana.

media, for example, publicized the reaction of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development to President A.Kuffo Addo's call for whistleblowers or citizens to provide concrete evidence of alleged political corruption in his government (Center for Democratic Development, 2018). Rather than agreeing with the president, this independent organization argued that it is the duty of the relevant state anti-corruption bodies paid by citizens through taxation to investigate allegations of political corruption thoroughly and independently and produce the evidence by following the leads that citizens and whistleblowers provide (Center for Democratic Development, 2018). This rebuttal is very instructive since the public institutions¹⁴ funded by the public purse and charged to address national security concerns such as uncontrolled political corruption should do their work without government interferences.

Private media provide the necessary platforms for influential anti-corruption activists and independent non-governmental organizations to access a bigger audience and create anti-corruption awareness and call for more stringent measures to tackle political corruption. These observations are consistent with the existing literature (Anorl & Lal, 2012; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, 2013; Srivastava, 2016). Mungiu-Pippidi (2013a) argues for a strong partnership between the media and anti-corruption non-governmental organizations in the fight against corruption. The coverage provided by private mass media provides for anti-corruption efforts by individuals and civil society organizations in Ghana looks promising for such future anti-corruption collaborations and partnerships.

The results also indicate that the private mass media report on the work of state anti-corruption institutions. As Figure 5.7 indicates, approximately 16% of the information for Peace FM media reportage on political corruption originate from the state anti-corruption bodies compared to 18% for Joy FM. This result suggest that private media are reporting on political corruption, covering findings or reports from the state anti-corruption agencies, including the Economic and Organized Crime Organization (EOCO), the Auditor General's Department and the Parliamentary Committee on Finance (Brakopowers, 2018; Gadugah, 2016). This finding reflects, as the literature shows, the media responsibility to educate and inform the people about the conduct of public affairs (Jarso, 2010; McQuail, 2010; Rajak, 2014). The mass media do not only report

¹⁴Examples of these public institutions include the police, the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI), the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Auditor General's Department and the Economic and Organized Crime Organization (EOCO).

on the work of state anti-corruption institutions but also critique, legitimize and help strengthen them to do their job more diligently and effectively to fight political corruption (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Rajak, 2014).

Based on the critical examination of the selected news articles, the nature and purpose of media reporting on political corruption can be seen both positively and negatively. On the positive side, the nature and purpose of political corruption reporting cuts across agenda setting, pressure for anti-corruption reforms, awareness creation and forums for anti-corruption debate. The groundbreaking investigations by Joy FM's award-winning investigative journalist, Manasseh Awuni (2016a, 2016b, 2017), for example, have exposed several cases of political corruption, such as the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA). These exposés carry multi-purpose implications from agenda setting to civil society campaigns for anti-corruption reforms. They create momentum for broader national anti-corruption conversations and renew calls on government from opposition political parties, non-governmental anti-corruption organizations, religious bodies and individual citizens to aggressively tackle political corruption (Joy FM, 2017a; Mordy, 2014; Quao, 2015; RTI Coalition, 2014).

Conversely, both the opposition and governing political parties aggressively engage in propaganda peddling and trading of accusations in the media to score political points in the eyes of the public and so to drive their political agenda – i.e., winning or retaining political power to advance their parochial interests. The New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress have demonstrated that they are distinguished experts in eliminating political corruption by using propaganda within the media landscape without taking concrete measures to deal with the problem decisively when they assume the reins of government (Ablorh, 2016; Adarkwah-Yiadom, 2016; Citizens Awake Forum, 2013). As Mafukata (2015) argues, “Political leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa changes to facilitate for those who were far away from public resources to access public resources” (p. 89). It is for this reason that the media, which wield dominant influence in the public sphere, are recommended to fight for an inclusive development by facilitating and spearheading a stronger, non-partisan national political activism to prevent political predators from plundering national resources at will (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, 2013a).

In conclusion, the results indicate that at least the private mass media have been reporting on political corruption to create awareness, provide opportunities for anti-corruption discourse, press for legal and institutional reforms and set the anti-corruption agenda. At the same time, the

reporting also covers misleading information intended to promote a particular political cause or a point of view for private gain at the expense of the general welfare and security of the Ghanaian peoples.

5.4. Typology of Private Mass Media in Ghana

As enshrined in Article 162 (5), the 1992 Constitution of Ghana allows media freedom and the setting up of the private mass media by any citizen (Republic of Ghana, 1996, p. 87). The private media sector is, therefore, not homogenous in ownership. As a result, based on ownership characteristics and the tendency to play either watchdog or anti-watchdog functions, the private mass media can be categorized into three types. One research participant explained the division like this:

In the commercial sector, we have media set up by people as a business. There is a category of media set up by owners purely for the media business. Second, there is a category of owners who have set it up, owners who are affiliated with political parties and own media and use the media for political propaganda. The third category is the business people who have an affiliation with political parties and who have established the press. The media in this sense is more for media activity producing news and so forth though sometimes they use it for political activities. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

As Gyan further explains, it is the first category of the private mass media established purely for media business that is relatively committed to fighting political corruption in Ghana:

In my estimation, it is the first category of the media, those set up by business people who have no known or clear political affiliation to political parties whose media are doing journalism. They are set up to do just journalism, an example is Joy FM/ Multimedia Group, and then there are others, small, small media all over the country by business people in those regions and districts who are not affiliated to any political party. They are independent business people who have set up their media. Because they have independence from all political parties, it is those media that can expose the corruption of all forms. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

This category has no known affiliation with any political party, and as a result, it is freer and more independent in tackling issues of political corruption.

Other research participants, such as politicians, confirmed that the Multimedia Group is a clear example of the first typology of the independent and free private mass media without any known political or business affiliations. Participants, therefore, pointed out that the Multimedia Group has been at the forefront of investigating cases of political corruption, regardless of the political party in power. One politician explained attitudes towards the group Multi-Media:

Every opposition party likes Multi-Media, and every ruling government hates Multi-Media. Recently, when the NPP was in opposition, they liked Multi-Media because they would always expose corruption in government. Now that NPP is power, it is at loggerheads with the Multimedia Group because it exposes the rot in government. (Kwame, October 26, 2017).

This excerpt indicates that Multimedia Group is a leader in investigations and exposures of political corruption in Ghana, and it thus typifies the first category of the independent and free mass media committed to tackling political corruption irrespective of the political party in power.

The second category of the private mass media owned by leading members of the political parties has been established primarily for political propaganda purposes. As explained by one participant, the private mass media in this category only fight political corruption when their political party is in opposition or when it is in their political party's interest to tackle political corruption:

The media owned by party people typically expose political corruption when their party is in opposition. For instance, Radio Gold which is a pro-NDC radio station will expose corruption in government now that their party is in opposition. When their party is in power, they would instead defend any accusations of corruption against their party in power. Similarly, Oman FM or some other stations or newspapers aligned the ruling NPP would behave like that. This category fights corruption when it is in the interest of their political party, and in that sense, a political agenda against a political party which may be in power. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

Other participants shared this view. Another participant (a politician) expressed his frustrations this way:

We (politicians) own the media stations, and we employ people who are loyal to our parties, and therefore they do the dictates of ours. If an expose comes on Radio Gold, the NPP will say it is an NDC station and they will never deal with it. If an expose comes on Oman FM, the NDC will say it is an NPP station and they will never deal with it. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

These excerpts demonstrate that the private media owned by politicians hardly make meaningful contributions to the fight against political corruption particularly when their party is in power. The secondary data also confirm this second category of private media ownership. The Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders (2017b) observe that politicians own a third of the private mass media outlets that it monitors.

Aside from media stations owned by politicians to do their party's biddings, the last category incorporates the private mass media owned by business people who are not politicians.

This category, however, has a declared political affiliation, and it occasionally does the bidding of the political party it supports. One male academic participant put it this way:

The last category is business people affiliated with political parties or who may be rich people who belong, or who are known to belong to political parties and who have set up media as media activity. Those media are not strictly for propaganda, but when it comes to elections, they will use their media to support this or that party in many subtle ways. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

The evidence shows that the private mass media have three distinct typologies based on ownership characteristics. As the secondary literature confirms, a remarkably “high number of media owners face conflicts of interest as they are active in or close to the political system” (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders (2018, p. 1). Regardless of the political party in power, the above typology of the Ghanaian private media ownership indicates if a particular private mass media will be genuinely committed to fighting political corruption.

The private media ownership in Ghana is also dominated by men. For example, women own two out of 25 media companies closely observed by Media Foundations for West Africa and Reporters Without Borders (2018). Additionally, in the private broadcasting media sector, another striking development is media ownership concentration and conglomeration. In Ghana, media ownership concentration is exemplified in only a few individuals either owning or having large shares in the major media groups, such as the Multimedia Group Limited, Despite Group of Companies and the Excellence In Broadcasting Network Limited. These few major private media groups own and control several different media outlets ranging from television to radio (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2017b; 2018), pointing to media conglomeration. As the literature indicates, media conglomeration and ownership concentration pose a significant threat to pluralistic media and effective watchdog role of the private mass media (Akhavan-Majid & Wolf, 1991), including fight political corruption in democratic countries such as Ghana.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has provided background information about mass media reporting on corruption to contextualize the current study. It covered descriptive statistics on media consumption and credibility and media reportage on corruption. The results suggest that the private mass have done some anti-corruption reporting, whose purposes cut across agenda-setting, awareness creation, the forum for anti-corruption debate and pressuring for accountable governance. The results also show

that the information sources informing media reports on political corruption include politicians, individuals and civil society, public officials, anti-corruption bodies, and investigative journalism. The results, however, show that investigative journalism and follow-up reporting are very limited in Ghana.

The final part of this chapter presented the three typologies of private mass media based on ownership dynamics – based on primary data collected in Ghana – and explained how these dynamics affect the watchdog functions of the private mass media in Ghana. The results show that only the first typology of private mass media are committed to consistent reporting on political corruption no matter the political party in power. The reason is that this category of private mass media is established by business people mainly for media business without any affiliation to any political party. On the other hand, the other two typologies of the private mass media only fight political corruption when it is in their interests – business and political party interests. The second typology of the private mass media is set up by business people who have affiliations with government or opposition political parties. Due to these political ties, they occasionally use their media platforms to serve the interests of the parties to which they are affiliated. The third category of the private mass media is established mainly for propaganda purposes given that the media owners in this category are leading members of political parties in Ghana. With this general context in mind, the next chapter investigates whether the private mass media have made any significant contributions to the fight against political corruption in Ghana.

CHAPTER 6

MASS MEDIA CONTRIBUTION TO ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation focuses on investigating whether the private mass media have played any meaningful role in the fight against political corruption in Ghana's fourth republic of the multi-party democratic system. To achieve this primary goal, it centers on three major research objectives. First, it examines how the privately-owned mass media have contributed to either tackling or aggravating the problem of Ghanaian political corruption. Second, it investigates factors that have either promoted or undermined the media watchdog role. Finally, it examines how the press can be strengthened to serve as a dominant anti-corruption force in Ghana.

As part of the efforts to accomplish objective one (1) above, the participants in this study were asked to answer this research question: "How have the privately-owned mass media contributed to fighting political corruption in Ghana?" Almost all the research participants indicated that the private mass media had performed some essential watchdog. These watchdog functions include exposing corruption, putting corruption on the political agenda (the agenda setting), creating awareness about corruption, providing a platform for anti-corruption dialogue and pressurizing for political accountability. The analysis of the selected media reports in the previous chapter confirm these findings. This chapter discusses in more detail these qualitative findings based on the interviews conducted in Ghana.

6.2 Exposure of Political Corruption

Most participants in this study reported that the private mass media had provided alternative sources of information about corruption, which the public media would otherwise not disclose, and had also exposed cases of political corruption. As one male academic and anti-corruption activist articulated,

And if you consider that for a long time, we were used to one source of information from the public media which was under the control of the executive, whichever executive was in power. The coming of the private media liberated sources of information to the public from the control of the state-owned media. That alone was a significant milestone in the private media doing so many other things beyond just providing ordinary news. Corrupt acts were acts that were done behind the scene, behind the veil and the public not getting the chance to see. Making information available, even if it is an allegation of corruption or suspicion of corruption, which the public media would not divulge, is one of the contributions of the private media. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

This excerpt from the interview transcript shows that the private mass media have provided the opportunity for alternative sources of information, including allegations of corruption, which before media liberalization in Ghana were impossible to obtain. This finding supports the existing literature in Ghana (Aikins 2013; Arthur, 2010; Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014), and elsewhere (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Gray, 2015; Jarso, 2010, Phiri, 2008; Srivastava, 2016). Aikins (2013), for instance, notes that private media have been an important conduit for information dissemination about national issues, such as suspicious budgetary allocations in Ghana.

More important, the majority of research participants from all the five clusters reported that the private mass media have contributed to the exposure of political corruption in Ghana. One female student expressed the contribution this way:

The media is also doing well regarding exposing the corrupt public officials through investigative reportage. We realize that some of the corrupt practices are covered, but with the help of investigative journalism, some of these corruption scandals are revealed. The media goes underground, investigate issues, and uncover some of the corrupt practices for the public to know and for the relevant authorities to take action. This investigative reporting is, therefore, helping in addressing the canker. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

Almost all the participants, including politicians, journalists, academics, students and anti-corruption activists, expressed a similar viewpoint and emphasized how the media exposure of political corruption broaden national anti-corruption conversations.

Participants cited many cases of political corruption exposed through investigative journalism. One journalist described the case like this:

We have SUBA where the government was supposed to plant trees and rear guinea fowls as a way to develop the northern regions, but that was not done. The monies were given out, but the trees were not planted, and the guinea fowls could not be found. Also, we have agencies getting government contracts to employ some people, and the amount they were charged was too high. The people they hired were not getting that money they said they were going to give to them. We had instances where the government had shipped in ambulances, but it turned out to be buses that have been transformed [converted] into ambulances. So the ambulances do not meet the standards, and therefore they are not being used. Journalists have brought these issues up. (Akweteiwaa, November 8, 2017).

Like Akweteiwa, most participants in this study confirmed the investigative role of the private mass media by citing cases such as the inflated electricity contract and the poverty-alleviation-program scandal in three northern regions exposed by the private mass media to support their point.

Some participants cited the contract awarded to the then ruling party member of the National Democratic Congress for the supply of 30 ambulant buses estimated at \$2.4 million (EOCO, 2017). The ambulance buses delivered, however, did not meet the required specifications for standard ambulance buses and have since been parked although the state made the full payment.

Similarly, other participants cited other cases of political corruption that the private mass media have exposed to affirm the nature of investigative journalism in Ghana. One investigative journalist argued the following:

JOY has done a lot of things that tackle the subject matter of your research. We did something on the youth employment program in this country in 2013. In 2014 we did something on Savana Accelerated Development Authority. Currently, we are doing something on the District Assemblies Common Fund and how contracts in the Ministry of Local Government are awarded. So these are some of the concrete things we have done, and these are about embezzlements, over-pricing of contracts, paying for services not delivered and paying double for the same services. So these are issues we have raised in our reports. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

This narrative provides further evidence about investigative journalism and its benefits in Ghana. The investigative work of the private media has uncovered several strategies, such as inflating the value of contracts, paying for non-existent contracts and paying twice for the same contract that politicians and their allies employ to misappropriate public resources for their private benefit.

These findings on the investigative role of the private mass media in unmasking political corruption are consistent with the existing literature (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Asah-Asante & Brako (2014; Gray, 2015; Jarso, 2010, Phiri, 2008; Srivastava, 2016). As Asah-Asante and Brako (2014) reports, investigative journalism has contributed to addressing public-sector corruption in Ghana. Gray (2015) has also documented the critical role of the private media in exposing high-profile corruption involving top government officials and business firms over non-existent energy contracts in Tanzania. Furthermore, as government officials tend to fear media exposure of their corrupt acts, investigative journalism exposing corruption results in pre-emptive response (Phiri, 2008). Thus self-regulation created by the threat of adverse media reporting and naming and shaming can help check corruption. The exposures mostly mobilize the public pressure on the relevant authorities to take measures to address the problem.

Finally, most research participants argued that the Multimedia Group had spearheaded investigations of political corruption in Ghana. One student had this to say:

To the best of my knowledge, the Joy Multimedia has taken the lead in investigating political corruption. A case in point is the former President Mahama's ford saga, which was exposed by Manasseh of Joy Multimedia. Manasseh also exposed the GYEEDA saga. (Yeboah, November 3, 2017).

This excerpt confirms that the Multimedia Group has been the leading private mass media committed to exposing political corruption in Ghana. Two of these exposed cases of political corruption, however, have been singled out for further discussions given that almost every participant talked about them. These cases involve the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) and Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA), both of which illustrate the indispensable role that investigative journalism has played in fighting political corruption in Ghana. These two cases have been selected since they were high-profile corruption scandals, which were well-reported in the Ghanaian media (see Appendixes c & D).

6.2.1 GYEEDA

Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) was set up in 2006 to contribute to addressing the teeming youth unemployment in Ghana. The scheme was intended to provide the youth beneficiaries with employable skills. The program consisted of modules ranging from youth in agri-business to youth in trades and vocations, youth in paid internship and industrial attachments, youth in information and technology, youth in community protection and youth in waste and sanitation (Sakyiamah, 2014).

Several companies, including Agams Group, Zoomlion, and Asongtaba, received payment for implementing the various modules. In 2009, Asongtaba, for instance, was supposed to train about 32000 unemployed youth in hairdressing, soap making, carpentry, tie and die, smock making, auto mechanic and guinea fowl rearing. Although this company failed to render these services, it could not account for the monies received. It was estimated that GH¢1.5 billion (about 312 million USD) was lost through the entire GYEEDA scandal (Asiamah, 2014).

The exposure of corruption within the GYEEDA paved the way for legal and institutional reforms. One investigative journalist explained what led to the reforms:

It led to the passage of a law. Hitherto, there was no such law governing the operations of the Youth Employment Agency. So they [YEA] could do anything they like but after that investigation, the government set up a committee. The committee corroborated our findings. All the contracts (over ten) except one got canceled. Monies were retrieved. They retrieved about fifteen (15) million dollars from one

group of companies, and the cancellation of these contracts saved more than 100 million dollars. So that is all I can say about that program. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

This investigation led to the retrieval of about 115 million dollars and the institutional restructuring of the scheme to prevent future occurrences of political corruption. As previously discussed, this finding further is consistent with similar studies (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Gray, 2015; Jarso, 2010; Phiri, 2008; Srivastava, 2016).

Likewise, a politician in this study expressed a similar picture about the benefits of investigative journalism:

For example, GYEDA (which started as a youth employment agency) came into operation without any regulations or laws governing it. Following the investigations, a law was passed to govern the scheme so that the government or the party in power does get up and appoint its people in managing the affairs of the agency. So this means that appointments must be based on the right qualifications and people appointed must work in the interests of the state, not party interests. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

Like this politician, other participants argued that the exposure of corruption in the youth employment scheme by the private media led to the enactment of laws to govern the operations of the program, which was initially run based on the influences and interests of the governing political party. This finding indicates that investigative journalism is critical in the fight against political corruption since, as documented in the literature, it provides a catalyst for reforms, prosecution of the alleged offenders and retrieval of stolen state resources (Gray, 2015; Profess et al., 1991; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). In an investigation of political corruption in Kenya, Jarso (2010) shows that the mass media there bring to light issues of public concern including political corruption, and hold public officials accountable.

6.2.2 SADA

The Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) was a program established by the Government of Ghana in 2010 to narrow the poverty gap between the three main northern regions and the rest of Ghana through several programs, including an afforestation program and guinea fowl rearing. This scheme was also intended to check the influx of northern youth into the southern part of Ghana in search of non-existing jobs (Government of Ghana, 2010). The management of SADA, however, could not account for the scheme's resources as the intended beneficiaries did not benefit from the program as planned. As one investigative journalist noted,

What is wrong is with the leadership. It's just like how the elite politicians of Africa are super rich and buying expensive property in foreign lands while their people suffer. It's a story of the elite making money from the miserable masses. Funds from donors always abound. But they never reach their intended target. That's the story of the north and its elites (Awuni, 2014, p. 20.

This case of political corruption within SADA got into the public domain as a result of findings from multimedia investigative journalism that focused on the scheme (Joy Online News, 2014). Steps were taken to retrieve the lost monies as six officials of SADA were asked to refund over 830 000 Ghana cedis (Joy Online News, 2014).

This finding re-emphasizes the need for investigative journalism to the fight against political corruption as documented in previous studies in Ghana (Asah-Asante, 2014), and elsewhere (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Gray, 2015; Jarso, 2010; Phiri, 2008; Srivastava, 2016). In India, Srivastava (2016) provides several cases of political corruption exposed by private mass media. Stapenhurst and O'Brien (2000) show the classic work of investigative journalists in exposing corruption in developed countries, including Italy and Canada. Limited studies in the African context also shows that investigative journalism has contributed to the fight against political corruption in Uganda (Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011) and Kenya (Jarso, 2010).

6.3 Agenda Setting

Agenda-setting theory argues that mass media bring out issues for society and particularly the government to think about and address as a matter of urgency or importance (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Rajak, 2014). The current study shows that, in Ghana, agenda setting is a critical function of the private mass media in the fight against political corruption. Most participants from all five categories, such as journalists, politicians, academics and anti-corruption activist affirmed the agenda-setting role of the media. As one journalist in this study pointed out,

They set the agenda as they try to highlight corruption issues, especially those involving public officials most of the time. They tend to do it better if that particular media outlet in quote belongs to the opposition because they want to expose to discredit the government so that their party can come to power. (Tagoe, November 8, 2017).

Like Tagoe, one male politician who belongs to the ruling New Patriotic Party confirmed the agenda-setting role of the private mass media:

The media is also serving as a platform for anti-corruption discussions. At the same time, it is setting the agenda to pursue the corrupt officials and entities. (Kwame, October 31, 2017).

The findings indicate that the private mass media have helped to put political corruption on the political radar for attention, particularly during electioneering campaigns. As a result, political parties in Ghana give high prominence to anti-corruption measures in their manifestos. In the 2016 presidential elections, for instance, one of the major campaign promises of the New Patriotic Party was to establish an office of the special prosecutor to fight political corruption. This party, which won the presidential elections, has now created an office of the special prosecutor (Government of Ghana, 2018). The private mass media have also helped put the need for the right to information law on the political agenda to facilitate their watchdog role with the aim of promoting transparency and accountability. However, despite pressure from the media and civil society organizations, the bill has still yet to be passed.

This agenda-setting role of the private mass media in Ghana reflect previous findings (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). Asah-Asante and Brako (2014), for example, confirm the agenda-setting role of the private mass media in Ghana. As Arnold and Lal (2012) also show in the context of Philippines and India, private mass media play an agenda-setting role in calling attention to corruption, which make relevant state authorities take corrective measures.

Some participants, however, argued that politicians have instead taken over the agenda-setting role of the private mass media to serve their private interests. As one journalist in this study argued,

The media is supposed to be an agenda-setting instrument. When you set the agenda, it is like you are pitching an idea and you are telling your audience that this is what I want to project. You do not allow the people to tell you what they want. Now the tables have turned. Instead of the media setting the agenda, the politicians are setting the agenda. So it brings to mind what kind of journalistic ethics or principles come with the profession? So the media will now have to look at reducing politics. Politics should be cut down to 90% if possible. (Yaw, October 17, 2017).

This participant believed that private mass media had shirked its agenda-setting role, allowing politicians to dictate what the private mass media should focus on. Because of the actions and inactions of politicians, much-needed attention has not been paid to critical problems impacting ordinary citizens. Mungiu-Pippidi (2006, 2013a) thus strongly encourages the mass media to assert their agenda-setting function by foregrounding corruption issues and by mobilizing for reforms.

6.4 Awareness Creation & Education

Anti-corruption education and awareness creation are crucial in the fight against corruption (African Union, 2004; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016; UN, 2004). Most research participants in this study claimed that the private mass media had contributed massively to creating awareness of and educating the public about the adverse effects of corruption and approaches to deal with the problem. As one journalist in this study said,

Somehow, the media has also educated the public about political corruption regarding the harms it causes to society and how they can contribute to addressing the problem (Agyemang, November 3, 2017).

Another male academic in this study noted,

The media is a critical player in the fight against corruption everywhere in the world because of the peculiar position it finds itself, educating and informing the masses. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

Confirming the views of these participants, one male student had this to say:

In Ghana, the mass media has done well regarding awareness creation. I appreciate the media for what they have done so far regarding elections and for making us aware of some of the corrupt activities in government. (Richie, October 17, 2017).

These responses show that private mass media have created awareness and provided education about political corruption in Ghana. The media have informed the public about adverse effects of political corruption on the development efforts of the country.

In their three-pronged approach to tackling corruption, both the United Nations' and the African Union's conventions against corruption (African Union, 2004; United Nations, 2004) emphasize education as a critical element, along with prevention and enforcement. Awareness creation and education are intended to encourage individuals and civil society organizations to be actively involved in helping to address the problem, for example, by refraining from corruption and reporting suspicions of corruption.

As documented in the existing literature, the current findings indicate that the media are the primary conduit for anti-corruption education (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016). In Zambia, Phiri (2008) observes that private mass media contribute to building anti-corruption culture. The awareness creation and education build and sustain anti-corruption

culture by influencing people to detest corruption and to serve as whistleblowers as part of national efforts to minimize corruption.

6.5 Platform for Anti-Corruption Discourse

The private mass media have provided opportunities for the masses to discuss politics and hold leadership accountable. As one female student in this study noted,

Another contributory factor is “politainment” (political entertainment). Previously, political issues were the preserve of the elites when the masses were mostly not involved in discussing political problems because they were considered to have a shallow knowledge when it comes to political matters. But with the introduction of politainment, media houses talk about politics in an entertainment form, and this has become very welcoming for the masses to become involved. So now we don’t have a situation where discussion of political issues is done only by a few elites. The politainment has invited the masses especially the youth to be involved in politics which was not the case in times past. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

This quote emphasizes the avenues that the private mass media provide for the ordinary people to have their voices heard about the problem of political corruption. In Ghana, *politainment* is one of the famous media programs where journalists, while denouncing acts of political corruption, tell jokes that inspire the youth, in particular, to contribute to the anti-corruption discourse.

Participants also stated that private mass media had provided avenues for anti-corruption organizations to reach out to the masses. As one female student in this study further explained:

Also, the private media has created the platform that allows other anti-corruption agencies, whose main aim is to fight corruption, to reach out to a large number of people concerning creating awareness about the negative impact of political corruption and the need to address the problem. For instance, through the platform built by the media, the National Commission for Civic Education can sensitize the public that taking gifts and monies from politicians to vote for them is in itself a form of corruption, which does not allow the right people to be elected into office. By providing the platform for sensitizing the public, the media is helping to control corruption. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

This narrative demonstrates that the private mass media have contributed to curbing political corruption by providing the channel for expanding public anti-corruption sensitization and including citizens in the anti-corruption discussions.

Participants argued that using this platform, the private media had promoted a rich diversity of views on the anti-corruption debate, on successive government policy directions, and on policy failures resulting from lack of implementation of anti-corruption laws. As one anti-corruption activist in this study noted,

The platform that private media creates for discussing corruption issues is a plus regarding bringing about differing perspectives on the subject. It also gives people the opportunity to say their side of the story, and opportunity for citizens to express themselves. (Kwasi, November 2, 2017).

One male academic participant in this study painted a similar picture:

The promulgation of 1992 Constitution and the liberalization of the airwaves have led to as it were the setting up of many private radio stations, television stations, and even newspapers, which have opened the floodgates for people to express themselves freely. (Quartey, November 8, 2017).

These interview excerpts demonstrate the role of the private mass media in providing the necessary platforms for all shades of opinion on political corruption scandals and in addressing the problem within the Ghanaian political context.

These results show that the private mass media provide the platform for discussing issues relating to political corruption in Ghana. As the existing literature indicates, to reach out to a large number of audiences, the private mass media have supplied channels for anti-corruption campaigners, such as individuals and government and non-government agencies (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016). Arnold and Lal's (2012) observations underscore the importance of a media platform for fighting corruption in India and the Philippines. In the case of Ghana, Aikins' (2013) suggests that the private media provide a critical platform for an anti-corruption discourse concerning public-sector corruption.

By providing this forum for anti-corruption discourse, private mass media have pressed for the legal and regulatory reforms to prevent political corruption in Ghana. Most of the participants in this study reported that the private mass media have played preventive functions against political corruption. One male academic participant had this to say:

And generally also, Ghanaians are sensitive to criticisms, to exposure in the media and all that and such mentality is preventing people, not only politicians but also public servants, in general, to be a bit careful. (Quartey, November 8, 2017).

Similar to Quartey's submission, one seasoned journalist articulated the preventive role of the media as follows:

Today, you also have private media people covering parliamentary proceedings, including bill considerations. And if, for instance, there are some things in bills yet to be passed into law that wouldn't be helpful, they bring those to public attention to mobilize support for a revision of such bills. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

A student participant also affirmed the preventive role of the private mass media against political corruption:

The media has also waged a campaign that frowns upon people being called into political office based on political affiliation rather than merit. People who have helped in some ways to enable a party comes to power, such as contributing to financing the party, are often rewarded with appointments to say thank you. This practice has also created a situation in which square pegs are put in round holes that result in political corruption. The media has therefore campaigned against this practice. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

This narrative indicates that the private mass media have advocated the appointment of public officials based on merit rather than nepotism, favoritism, and clientelism, all of which are other forms of corruption and can create further opportunities for political corruption (Mafakatu, 2015; Mutebi, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). Overall, the excerpts demonstrate the preventive role of the private mass media in contributing to the fight against corruption.

The findings show that the private mass media cover parliamentary proceedings and so bring to public attention flaws in bills under consideration that can create room for political corruption, and provide the forum for discussions to mobilize the public support for revising these bills. The private mass media also invite experienced and knowledgeable guests to discuss existing laws and policies concerning measures that need to be taken to remove structural incentives for corruption. In Ghana, many private mass media stations have morning programs that allow citizens, representatives of political parties and government, and civil society organizations to discuss national concerns, particularly political corruption. By pressing for amendment and repeal of existing laws, which provide a breeding ground for corruption, these discussions on the private media channels help in reducing the inherent opportunities for political corruption. These findings are consistent with the existing literature (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Srivastava, 2016).

6.6 The Demand for Political Accountability

The majority of the participants argued that private mass media had been a steady force for pressing for political accountability. Private media, for instance, hold the executive to their campaign compromises. As one male participant, an executive member of the Ghana Journalist Association narrated,

The media is now contributing to ensuring political accountability. It reminds politicians about their electoral campaigns and whether or not they are honoring

them when they are in power. The media is a strong force for fighting corruption in this 21st century. (Asare, October 30, 2017).

Other participants express a similar view of the media's demands for political accountability. As one student in this study reported,

There are programs on Adom FM, "Fabewoso" (I dare you to come out, or else I hold what I have as the truth) and "Burning Issues" that mainly aim at exposing corruption, especially the "Fabewoso" a morning program hosted by Captain Smart. He brings proofs and dares people in question to come out and answer questions, and also ask relevant authorities to act on the issues raised. The media has done well in this regard, but there is still more to be done (Yeboah, November 11, 2017).

Thus, according to this participant, in their efforts to promote political accountability, specific media programs use evidence to name and shame alleged corrupt politicians.

Participants from both the governing and the main opposition parties also stated that private mass media have helped to call politicians to account. One participant, a politician, indicated the effect of these actions:

Governments will not like their agencies to be exposed in the media without doing anything about it to address the issues in question. They will put in a mechanism, either a committee or a commission, to try to look into the structures, processes, and procedures to address the lapses that might have caused the commission of the corruption. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

As this excerpt demonstrates, to maintain their party's image and to win elections, political elites typically try to address political corruption exposed by the private mass media. One participant, an anti-corruption activist, argued that such media exposure had injected a sense of electoral accountability into Ghana's body politic:

One of the biggest fears of every government is to lose votes and therefore once a corruption issue is put out there, and it is gaining traction with the citizens and gathering momentum, governments are forced to respond. So once upon a time, there was an issue with the bus branding in Ghana where the private media took up the issue and highlighted it, followed up consistently, the government was forced to act. Whether the action was satisfactory or not is another issue. (Kwasi, November 2, 2017).

The findings show that the private mass media have contributed to the demand for political accountability in Ghana. The private mass media have monitored the governing political party's manifestos, informing the public about whether they are being implemented. In this way, the

private mass media have acted as a pressure group to convince the government's executive to advance the collective welfare and security of the general public and to fulfill its electoral promises. Some private radio and television stations have even invited ministers of state to account for the failure of anti-corruption efforts and to explain the steps the government is taking to address the problem.

These stations have also provided the opportunity for citizens and civil society organizations to express dissatisfaction with and question the members of the executive on their anti-corruption efforts. The public outcry about these programs generates enormous pressure on the executive to implement anti-corruption measures for fear of losing presidential elections. In this sense, the private mass media have helped make the executive accountable to the people. This observation is consistent with the literature (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Phiri, 2008; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016). Put another way, the media play a critical role in putting the political leadership 'on its toes' in responding to the needs of the people rather than serving their own parochial interests.

The literature supports another finding of this study – private media's anti-political corruption efforts have resulted in positive outcomes, including the retrieval of state assets and policy and legal changes (Gray, 2015; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Rajak, 2014; Srivastava, 2016; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). Arnold and Lal (2012), for example, report that the media watchdog role shapes policy-making and legislative reforms. Private mass media, therefore, contribute to political accountability by pressing for anti-corruption reforms.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has examined how the private media in Ghana have played a constructive role in the struggle against political corruption in Ghana. Overall, the current findings show that the private mass media in the country have helped fight political corruption via investigative reporting, agenda-setting, the forum for discussion and pressures for accountability. The next discussions focus on ways in which the private mass media have compounded the problem of political corruption rather than helping to address it.

CHAPTER 7

THE MEDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL CORRUPTION

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed the role of the traditional private mass media in helping fight political corruption in Ghana. This chapter examines how the private media have also added to the problem of political corruption. The findings and discussions that follow revolve around research question two: “How have the privately-owned mass media contributed to the problem of political corruption in Ghana?” In response to this question, research participants expressed a depth of knowledge about the mass media’s failure to perform their critical watchdog functions in the Ghanaian context. One male academic participant argued the following:

The media may contribute to the problem in different ways. The constitution states that all media, regardless of ownership, should demand accountability from the governments to the people. In that sense, all media must fight corruption, for instance. Based on this constitutional obligation, we can say that when media do not expose corruption, then they are either condoning it or closing their eyes on it. Therefore, they are not playing their watchdog functions. Now, that is how some of the media, for instance, the partisan media, the media that are out and out for political parties, behave. They will not, first of all, expose corruption when their party is in power. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

This participant suggested that a large segment of the media had abandoned their constitutionally mandated watchdog role. Another participant, a female academic, explained it this way:

Well, some of them are bought, some of them have been co-opted, and some of them have been corrupted. Some of them are partisan, and so when they are partisan, they support a particular government and therefore lend themselves to being used either to defend the political party they are affiliated with corruptive practices or attack opposition or to attack people who raised issues about corruption. Some of them too are themselves corrupt. (Dzifa, October 26, 2017).

Based on the research participants’ responses, this chapter argues that the private mass media have contributed to political corruption through media corruption, biased reporting, propaganda peddling, the pursuit of ownership interests and failure to do investigative journalism and follow-up reporting.

7.2 Media Corruption

Participants from all five categories, including politicians, journalists and academics, stated that the private mass media have contributed to the problem of political corruption in Ghana through

media corruption. They argued that most private media houses had been an accomplice in the commission of political corruption. One male academic explained it this way:

There are two ways, in my view, in which the media become an accomplice. One being directly collecting money from the alleged perpetrators of corruption to kill stories and not to publish them, but the other is just doing the propaganda part of it, and I think that that is where we find ourselves today regarding the private media and the fight against corruption. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

This narrative shows that corrupt media houses and journalists become part of the corrupt network.

One investigative journalist in this study confirmed this viewpoint expressed by the academics:

I have a report from people who tell me that well there was an act of corruption and some journalists were given money not to report it. And I know some of the corrupt people who are exposed or people involved in corruption who are exposed have a lot of friends in the media. So sometimes, I do a story, you find my colleague journalist fighting me for exposing corruption. So all of these feed into the perception that the media is compromised and I have said it many times that the media is not able to do enough because we are also complicit in the corruption. (Kwasi, October 17, 2017).

This excerpt indicates that some media houses and journalists who accept monetary and non-financial offers from corrupt government officials contribute to political corruption in Ghana by deliberating deciding not to expose or publish corruption scandals that affect these political elites.

Participants mentioned instances in which media persons have received cash or kind to do the bidding of politicians or political parties in a manner that compromises political anti-corruption reporting in Ghana. One leading male politician from the main opposition party provided details about this situation:

That has always been the practice in this country. When NDC was in opposition, we had the likes of Raymond Archer, Pobi Fiagbe, and Ametor Kwame who were on the heels of the ex-president Kuffour [NPP] administration on actions perceived to be corrupt. But when the NDC came to power, they were not seen in that limelight as they have been offered cash or positions. So they could not make these claims of corruption even though sometimes such perceived acts of corruption were within the NDC administration, yet they would not talk about them. Similarly, when the NPP was in opposition, journalists like Paul Adom Okyeres, Kwaku Bakos, and Kwame Sefa Kai who were touting corruption in the NDC administration are now silent about perceived acts of corruption that have been raised in their government, as they have been offered positions, monies and other things. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

This corrupt symbiotic relationship between the journalists and influential politicians and their dominant political parties has become an integral part of Ghanaian politics today.

Some participants believed that corruption within the media is even more problematic in well-established media organizations and relatively well-paid journalists. As one male investigative journalist in this study expressed,

I think it is widespread among the media organizations and the journalists that matter because some do not wield any influence. But some journalists and media houses are so influential that if they were to do their work very well, we would see a difference. (Kwasi, October 17, 2017).

Another participant, a female academic, described the situation this way:

The grand one where particularly for well-established journalists, they are paid to sing a particular tune. Sometimes, they are given money, a lot of money, sometimes cars I hear. And in return, they are loyal to those governing political elites. (Dzifa, October 26, 2017).

Most participants supported this narrative that established journalists and media houses engage in corruption. This finding contrasts with previous observations that poorly paid journalists and struggling media houses typically engage in corruption (Besley & Prat, 2006; Jarso, 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). In Uganda, for example, Wasswa and Kakooza (2011) observed that poor compensation of journalists is the critical motivating factor for media corruption.

The findings from the current study, confirmed by the majority of the participants, indicate that the private mass media have contributed to political corruption through their own corrupt acts. Some media practitioners and owners have been doing the bidding of certain political parties and government officials to open doors to a wide range of opportunities, including securing a political appointment, scholarships for their children, and the chance to contest parliamentary elections. The participants cited other instances in which private mass media outlets and practitioners are reported to have collected cash or kind for killing political corruption stories by not publishing them.

These findings reflect past observations (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Pablo, 2004; Mutebi, 2008; Vaidya, 2005; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). As Besley and Prat (2006) note, legislative safeguards of media freedom in theory and practice do not automatically prevent government interferences and potential media capture. As observed in Russia, government provides financial support to media houses as a way to influence media reporting in favor of the

government (Besley & Prat, 2006). Vaidya (2005) shows that media corruption undermines the fight against government corruption in both developing and developed countries. In the African context, Jarso (2010), for example, shows that corruption within the media is one of the major internal factors undermining media commitment to helping address corruption in Kenya. McMillan and Zoido (2004) provide the most compelling evidence of media corruption in which top government officials, including the president, bribed different media houses to conceal political corruption in Peru.

7.3 Excessive Partisan Reporting

The literature recommends that to become active anti-corruption forces, the private mass media should avoid excessive partisan reporting on corruption cases (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Pablo, 2004; Sowunmi et al., 2010; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). In the current study, however, all participants indicated that the private mass media had exhibited excessive partisanship due to political affiliation. This partisanship has compromised objective media reporting on corruption. One male journalist explained the problem this way:

The media men today are almost politicians because hardly will you meet a media person who is only doing his work as a media person. Media persons openly support political parties and candidates. Bribery and corruption have engulfed almost everybody including media practitioners. Media practitioners whom we thought were doing very well who have had appointments in this administration for doing some work for their paymasters. And in the previous administration, we had media people who used the media as a conduit to do some work which people thought was in the interest of the nation but they amassed wealth for themselves. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

This narrative shows that some journalists work for political parties and candidates to gain political power to serve their private interests including securing appointments.

Other participants in this study expressed a similar concern about this excessive partisan reporting in the private mass media. As one female student narrated,

One thing I will say is the political affiliation. Journalism requires the practitioners to be neutral, but most journalists are affiliated with political parties to achieve their political agenda or ambition. So journalists may not be in for immediate money, but by declaring support for a particular party or candidate, they hope to get an appointment when that party or candidate wins power. We have seen instances of Abeku Santana and the rest. Journalism and politics should not merge – they are two different institutions, and so there should be a separation between the two. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

Like Ama, most participants, such as politicians from both governing and opposition parties, argued that biased reporting on political corruption based on partisan political interests of journalists and media owners had undermined the watchdog functions of the private media. As one politician in this study articulated,

Largely, we have a certain form of media, pro-government and pro-opposition. Therefore, when it comes to an issue concerning a person in government, you will see how the pro-government media take it up and then when it is about the opposition, you see how the pro-opposition media goes to their defense. You don't see the media being neutral or objective no matter where the baton is falling. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

This narrative further shows that excessive partisanship in the private mass media is adding to political corruption in Ghana.

The findings show that private mass media with political affiliations have contributed to political corruption by way of biased reporting to benefit the political parties to which they are affiliated. To a large extent, private mass media in Ghana are divided along two main political lines – pro-government and pro-opposition. The pro-government private media outlets have typically failed to expose and fight political corruption in Ghana. If pro-opposition private mass media expose political corruption in government, the pro-government private mass media will mostly whitewash the exposé and defend the alleged corrupt members of the executive and their collaborators. This partisanship and biased reporting based on political affiliations is a reflection of the broader polarization of the Ghanaian society along these political lines to promote private interests at the expense of public welfare.

The findings indicate that, as the literature shows, the private mass media with political affiliations do not fight political corruption when their political party is in power (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Pablo, 2004; Mutebi, 2008; Sowunmi et al., 2010; Vaidya, 2005; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). In their review of the existing literature, Besley and Prat (2006) show that private mass media present a consistently positive image of the sitting government from which they receive payoffs or cash transfers for biased reporting to favor the government. They indicate, for example, “[T]he Russian media provide a sympathetic and sometimes incomplete account of government behavior” (Besley & Prat, 2006, p. 720). In the case of Nigeria, Sowunmi et al. (2010) provide compelling evidence of biased reporting to favor parties and government officials from whom journalists receive bribes either in cash or kind.

7.4 Propaganda Peddling

Most participants maintained that private mass media had become a tool of propaganda in a manner that compromises anti-corruption reporting. One female student in the study put it this way:

Another factor is the emergence of spin doctors [news managers in a negative sense]. The spin doctors are political journalists who support particular political parties, and so they bring up news/stories that put their political parties in a positive light. The spin doctors are manipulating the media in the interests of the parties they support. Politicians are influencing the content of media houses to serve their parochial interests. Politicians now set media agenda rather than the media themselves setting the agenda to trigger public debate. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

This manipulation of private mass media to serve private interests through the introduction of spin doctors – political journalists advancing the cause of a particular political party – has negatively influenced the content of media reportage on political corruption. One academic in this study expressed a similar view:

One of our analyses here at this center concerning why the fight against corruption has become difficult is that the politicians have also come to understand and figure how to capture the media and how to use propaganda to destroy stories. So in Ghana today, if you are caught or reported to have been involved in corruption is oh because I belong to this party that is why I am witch hunted. And then the radio stations or print media that are connected with that alleged corrupt party or individual will do that bidding for you. The stories become confusing in the minds of the public because one side is saying yes and the other side says no, and I think it is deliberate on the part of the politicians to dilute the fight against corruption. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

According to Takyi, despite the weight of evidence indicating acts of political corruption, politicians have mostly succeeded in politicizing the fight against political corruption by describing any enforcement of anti-corruption measures as witch-hunting. Participants argued that part of the problem is that governments typically fail to prosecute political elites from the ruling party implicated in the commission of political corruption.

As the following extract shows, participants from the governing and opposition political parties shared a similar view about the worrying trend of propaganda peddling in the private mass media:

In Ghana, the licensing regime is for politicians – MPs, Ministers of States, Party executives, etc. – we own the media stations, and we employ people who are loyal to our parties, and therefore they do the dictates of ours. So there is no credibility, and it is all over. If an expose comes on Radio Gold, the NPP will say it is an NDC

station and they will never deal with it. If an expose comes on Oman FM, the NDC will say it is an NPP station and they will never deal with it. So what kind of media do we have? It cuts across all the media houses. You will hardly see a credible media house in Ghana today dealing with the issues rather than siding with just one political party. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

Thus, it appears that influential politicians have established media houses not for running media businesses but for strategic political purposes, such as spreading propaganda messages to refute allegations of political corruption made against them and their political party. In worse scenarios, some participants stated that politicians tribalize the anti-corruption process by falsely claiming that the ruling party (whichever political party is in power) is targeting members of specific tribal groups that form the stronghold of the main opposition party. This false claim of tribal witch hunting is intended to score political points by discrediting the party in power without regard for the negative security implications that this practice has on political stability and peace in the country. These observations suggest that politicians have come to understand how they can use propaganda by any means possible to complicate the fight against political corruption.

The participants' responses demonstrate that private mass media have also become a platform for propaganda peddling about allegations of political corruption in one mass media outlet and counter-allegations in another to serve both business and political party interests. The mass media outlets owned by the leading members of Ghana's two main political parties (New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress), for example, are typically used for propaganda purposes to serve political party interests. The mass media are a dominant force in disseminating information to inform citizens' voting patterns in national elections in Ghana, where the citizenry has the opportunity to vote out a corrupt leader, provided that the elections are free and fair. Hence, the struggles over winning or retaining political power between the opposition and governing parties are playing out in the private media field as both parties seek to gain an advantage in regulating the information flow to enhance their respective electoral fortunes.

This finding reflects the previous observations that provide evidence of "paid-for news," or "cash for the editorial" in both the global North and South where the beneficiary (the media) defends or advances the interests of the parties or people from whom they receive such illegal payments (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Pablo, 2004; Li, 2013; Mutebi, 2008; Vaidya, 2005; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). In Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda there have been several instances in which media outlets received money for blackmailing or "propaganda sponsorship" (Jarso, 2010;

Sowunmi et al., 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). This harmful activity of the media compromises anti-corruption work.

7.5 Weak Investigative Journalism

As corruption thrives in secrecy, it is through investigative journalism that political corruption can be brought into the light and mobilize public pressure to address this problem (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Klitgaard, 1988; Srivastava, 2016; Stapenhurst, 2000). Despite the importance of investigative journalism, the majority of participants stated that private mass media have virtually failed to establish an investigative department for anti-corruption reporting in Ghana. As one male investigative journalist in this study said,

Well, a lot of them do not have an investigative desk. The day-to-day reporting often relies on findings by the auditor general, and when it is discussed at the parliament's public accounts committee hearing, that is when the media feeds on them or once in a while when a document gets leaked or something like that. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

Another female journalist in this study confirmed the weak state of investigative journalism in Ghana:

Yes, one of the things most media houses do is when there is an issue of corruption involving, for example, one person in power, they call the person and call people around them to get information about the problem. But sometimes, I feel it is not just like you calling them; you can also go underground and find out the information on your own because sometimes people allegedly involved in the corruption feed you with what they want you to know. So if the media investigate the issue beyond those directly involved, they will get new information to add up to the story. (Abelety, November 8, 2017).

In other words, to secure reliable information about political corruption, the private mass media should perhaps avoid relying on those involved with allegations, who are unlikely to provide information that might potentially incriminate them. This lack of a strong culture of investigative journalism for anti-corruption reporting has contributed to corruption by making it fester in the dark without being exposed.

The research participants cited several barriers to investigative journalism in Ghana. These barriers include ownership pressure, partisanship (political affiliation), and political pressure, lack of a strong political will, time constraints and the absence of a right to information law. Other factors included lack of funding for investigative journalism, limited investigative skills and safety and security threat. These barriers to investigative reporting are virtually similar to the factors

militating against the performance of private mass media responsibilities to society (Besley & Prat, 2006; Coronel, 2008; Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Omojola, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; Vishwavidhyalaya & Bhopal, 2014).

The lack of strong political will to act on cases of corruption already exposed is a major disincentive to investigative journalism in Ghana. One male journalist in the study put it this way:

Investigative journalism is very weak, because of lack of motivation most especially because of inadequate government responses in bringing the perpetrators to book. It is a bit risky and expensive to do investigative journalism, but the government is not willing to act on the corruption expose. We have not seen a substantial commitment from the government regarding protecting the journalists and working on the information that they put out there. So there is no motivation for investigative journalism. (Agyemang, November 13, 2017).

Another investigative journalist had this comment to make on how investigative journalists are discouraged because there is little political commitment to pursue already revealed cases of political corruption:

Government responses are often not encouraging. Sometimes they would try to prosecute some small fishes in there, but the main culprits who are involved are often left off the hook. Sometimes, for political reasons, they try even to whitewash what we have done. It is discouraging when you realize the amount of information you have, the wrong someone has done, and they are trying to cover up, it discourages you. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

The government may take action if the issues cannot be overlooked due to intense public outrage and pressure. Failure to take some action may result in election losses. In most cases, however, the government tends to defend those alleged to have committed acts of corruption while attacking the media houses whose investigative work has unearthed these cases of political corruption. As one male academic participant in this study also confirmed,

In many cases, governments have mounted vigorous rebuttal and response against such reports and have used the party machinery and media that is favorable to the party or government to fight back. But many times, many of the exposures have been ignored (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

The anti-corruption investigative spirit of free and autonomous private mass media has been dampened by the failure to act on substantiated and exposed cases of political corruption and the habitual government attitude of launching an attack on independent private media behind such exposures. Participants in this study linked government's lack of keen interest in addressing political corruption to winner-takes-all politics in Ghana. As another male academic explained,

Winner-takes-all politics is the practice of state capture and the partisan monopolization of resources, power, and opportunities by ruling party and its cronies to the exclusion of all other Ghanaians who do not belong to the ruling party. (Fosu, November 6, 2017).

These responses indicate that the politicians and government officials charged with addressing political corruption have failed to do so because, as the literature shows, they directly benefit from corrupt acts (Mafukata, 2015; Wrong, 2009). This weak political will to act on already exposed political corruption has been one of the primary disincentives to investigative journalism in Ghana.

In addition to poor government responses, ownership pressures and interests, political affiliation also impedes investigative journalism. One academic in this study put it like this:

The media owned by party people typically expose corruption when their party is in position. If, for instance, Radio Gold, which is an out and out a pro-NDC radio station, now that their party is in opposition, they would sometimes come out with something they consider a fight against corruption. When their party is in power, they would rather defend any accusations of corruption against their party in power. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

These observations demonstrate that media ownership and party affiliation compromises media watchdog functions, including investigative anti-corruption reporting. Similarly, other participants reported that ownership pressures and political affiliation had affected investigative journalism in Ghana. One female journalist made the following points:

If I am working in a media house where the owner is affiliated with the government in power and I want to investigate this corrupt act against them, the owner tells me don't do it. You are forced not to do it. There are two things: either I stay and forget about the investigation, or I leave the work and go and do the investigation. And probably because I don't want to lose my job, I may be compelled to forget about the investigations and stay with my job (Ogu, November 9, 2017).

In other words, to protect their jobs journalists in media houses affiliated to specific political parties are compelled to turn a blind eye to political corruption in these parties. This negative impact of ownership interests, political affiliation and partisan media reporting on investigative journalism supports past research (Besley & Prat, 2006; Coronel, 2008; Jarso, 2010; Omojola, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; Vishwavidhyalaya & Bhopal, 2014).

Apart from ownership and management pressure, most participants maintained that access to information is a significant barrier to investigative journalism. One investigative journalist provided these details:

The major challenge is getting information from government sources because you do not have the right to information law. So the government agencies decide whether or not to give you the information and they would not give you information that will incriminate them. So it makes it very difficult. And sometimes too, media houses here operate with limited budgets, and so we are not able to go so far. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

Other participants expressed similar views. The absence of a right to information law has impeded investigative journalism in Ghana. As the literature indicates, to ensure transparency and accountability, citizens and non-governmental anti-corruption agencies need the legal right to access information (African Union, 2004; Jarso, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; UN, 2004; Vishwavidhyalaya & Bhopal, 2014).

Other barriers to investigative journalism mentioned by the participants include lack of funding for investigative journalism, limited investigative skills, time constraints and safety and security threat. One female journalist in this study emphasized the lack of resources:

But for an efficient and effective media for fighting corruption, we need resources. You see investigating corruption matters don't take a day. Sometimes, they take a long time, sometimes a year, two years or six months thereabouts. So you need the resources and help and all the stuff you need to engineer your investigations. (Ogu, November 9, 2017).

Most participants concurred, expressing that constraints in time and resources had hindered the investigative work of the private mass media. The time investment needed for investigative journalism has been a challenge to media houses and journalists alike in conducting undercover anti-corruption investigations.

Some participants pointed to security issues as another major barrier to investigative journalism in Ghana. As one student in this study noted,

Also, there is a potential threat to safety on the part of the journalists. Some journalists who expose political corruption are often threatened by people supporting the alleged corrupt officials, but the security forces often do little to protect these journalists under threat. This situation discourages investigative reporting against corruption. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

Other participants agreed that investigative journalists who expose the wrongdoing of powerful people often receive threats to their life. Secondary data confirms these safety concerns of investigative journalists in Ghana (Deane, 2016). Deane (2016) cited several threats received in

Ghana by Anas Aremeyaw, an internationally recognized investigative journalist, and also the case of one journalist who was shot and killed in Ghana.

However, some participants, including investigative journalists who investigate political corruption, disagreed, indicating that investigative journalists in Ghana are safe. One investigative journalist supported this perspective with an experience of his own:

For instance, I did a story about the President involving allegations of conflict of interest and bribery. He took a Ford Expedition from a Burkinabe contractor. It was getting to the elections I did that story, and I am still alive. Not many journalists elsewhere would dare do such a story, and even if they do, they will not live to do another investigation. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

Thus, participants in this study disagree on the safety of investigative journalists in Ghana. Yet, as mentioned, the literature suggests that there are reasons to be worried about the safety of journalists (Deane, 2016). Although there is disagreement on whether safety is an issue for investigative journalists, participants agree that investigative journalism in Ghana is impeded by limited resources and investigative training capacity, time constraints, political pressure, ownership interests and partisanship.

The results indicate that the absence of a strong culture of investigative journalism in the private mass media has aggravated political corruption by making it flourish in the dark. Although investigative journalism is essential for exposing political corruption and pressurizing authorities to address the issue (Gray, 2015; Srivastava, 2016; Rose-Ackerman, 2002), most research participants said that investigative journalism is very weak in Ghana. The majority of the private mass media stations do not have an investigative department devoted to doing undercover investigations. One main reason cited for this weak investigative journalism is that government has not adequately responded to cases of political corruption already exposed through investigations. The government often shows commitment to fighting political corruption if the alleged perpetrators are former government officials who belong to the opposition parties.

The findings also show that the sitting government acts on political corruption exposures – which implicate members of the executive and their allies – only when they cannot refuse to do so for fear of losing public support and electoral fortunes. In such cases, the big fishes are often let off the hook while the small fishes are prosecuted and sanctioned to demonstrate to the public that the government is committed to addressing political corruption. This research shows that, in Ghana, the absence of political will to investigate, prosecute and sanction government officials

and their accomplices already exposed as corrupt can discourage investigative journalism. This findings is confirmed in the literature (Abdulai, 2009). As several studies indicate, this problem does not only exist in Ghana and is an obstacle to the fight against political corruption generally (Gray, 2015; Mafukata, 2015; Naidoo, 2013; Wrong, 2009). In his book entitled *It is our turn to chop: The story of Kenya whistleblower*, Wrong (2009), for example, offers a classic illustration of how political elites' desire for illicit enrichment compromises their commitment to fighting political corruption in Kenya.

The results, however, show that doing investigative journalism in Ghana is generally safer compared to other countries, as indicated in the literature (Haque, 2012; Omojola, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; Vishwavidhyalaya & Bhopal, 2014). Example of these countries includes Nigeria, Kenya, and Venezuela where journalists can be murdered or imprisoned (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2012, 2017). Notwithstanding the fact that investigative journalism is comparatively safer in Ghana, undercover journalism is weak. This weak investigative journalism in Ghana has contributed to the problem of political corruption due to the lower likelihood of exposing the perpetrators to be dealt with within the confines of the law.

7.6 Limited Follow-Up Reporting

As literature elsewhere shows (Jarso, 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011), limited follow-up reporting on political corruption is one of the major ways in which the private media contribute to the problem in Ghana. In this study, participants, including politicians and journalists, reported that the private mass media had failed to do consistent follow-ups on political corruption issues to their logical conclusions and inform the public accordingly. As one journalist in this study argued,

There have been many instances in which we bring critical issues to bear, and discuss them for a week or two and we think that we have brought them to the public domain and then leave them there without getting the right results. We don't do a follow-up to check whether the law enforcement agencies have dealt with the issues. So if we can do follow-up journalism, it will put the law enforcement agencies on their toes to do their work more efficiently in addressing the corruption issues raised. (Agyemang, November 3, 2017).

Other participants expressed a similar view about the failure of the private media to do follow-up anti-corruption reporting. As one academic in this study articulated,

The problem with the media is lack of sustained action. There are so many issues that the country is dealing with, and every day there is something new. So today the media breaks a story and everybody talks about it, and everybody gets angry, the next day is a different story, and the previous one dies down. And I think the

politicians have come to realize oh let them talk, and we say that we are going to do something about it, the next morning something new will come. So there is a lack of sustained action (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

As these two excerpts demonstrate, private mass media fail to pursue follow-up reporting to ensure a logical conclusion of political corruption cases exposed or reported. As a result, anti-corruption stakeholders, including the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) and Joy FM, have introduced a *Corruption Watch Radio Program*. This program intends to pursue cases of political corruption exposed to their reasonable conclusions (Corruption Watch Secretariat, 2018).

This study demonstrates that the private mass media do not often follow up on political corruption cases to ensure their logical conclusions. In Ghana, the cases of political corruption exposed and reported in the private media often disappear from public view in a few days or weeks when the media break a new story. One of the reasons for this development is that Ghana is confronted with many issues that crop up almost every day and the private media want to capitalize on such new sensational stories to sell their newspapers or to keep their listeners updated. As the previous literature shows (Jarso, 2010; Haque, 2012; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011), this lack of consistent follow-up reporting on political corruption has contributed to political corruption. In Kenya, Jarso (2010) demonstrates a lack of follow-up on cases of corruption after the exposés. According to Jarso (2010), this lack of follow-up monitoring makes the problem of political corruption re-fester after the media spot has been taken off. The relevant authorities pretend to act in the midst of the media gaze that they know will only last a few days, after which they return to their routine corrupt activities. This evidence emphasizes the need for consistent follow-up anti-corruption reporting to ensure that the problem exposed is finally resolved.

7.7 A Pursuit of Ownership Interests

The pursuit of ownership vested interests is one of the primary factors undermining media watchdog functions in Ghana. All participants reported that private media ownership interests have impacted negatively on the fight against political corruption in Ghana. There have been instances where political and business elites own private mass media primarily to promote their individual, business and party interests at the peril of national interests. One academic explained:

Another interesting experience that happened recently is where a certain number of journalists were mobilized by Zoomi Lion to mount a campaign against Manasseh Azure for exposing allegations of corruption against Zoomi Lion in the

supply of waste bins. Some of the media that were campaigning against Manasseh were media owned by business people. ZoomLion has apparently bought Metro television and the leader of the campaign, Paul Adom Okyere, is a major host of a program, a highly respected host of programs on that television station. So businesses are owning media to defend their business interests. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

This excerpt shows that some dominant businesses are establishing or influencing media houses to protect their business interests in a way that compromises the fight against political corruption in Ghana.

Other participants supported the views of the academic on how the pursuit of ownership interests undermines the watchdog role of the private mass media. As one journalist said:

I think that the major problem has to do with media ownership. Most of these media houses are owned by very powerful politicians or people who have very strong ties with political parties or who are financiers of these political parties. They don't give much attention to cases of political corruption which involve their political parties because they think that doing so will affect their parties' electoral chances or fortunes. So I think that media ownership is the major factor contributing to political corruption. (Agyemang, November 3, 2017).

This excerpt from the interview transcripts demonstrates that private media owners aligned with the main political parties – the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party – hardly allow their media stations to expose political corruption cases implicating the parties they support. Journalists working in these media stations cannot fight political corruption for fear of losing their job. One male journalist explained how media owners block the performance of media responsibilities to society:

Today, we have media owners who are politicians and those media owners if you belong to parties other than their own, you cannot use their platforms to expose any wrongdoing including corruption involving their parties because you might end up losing your job. And you know the issue of joblessness in Africa, so people try to protect their jobs. So yes, in a lot of ways, media people today, I will say categorically, are in bed with politicians, and media people are affiliated with political parties. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

According to these participants, private mass media have contributed to the problem of political corruption through the pursuit of private interests that compromise objective anti-corruption reporting in Ghana.

The results show that the pursuit of media ownership private interests also has compounded the problem of political corruption in Ghana. Many private mass media owners are politicians in

Ghana. As a result, these owners do not authorize their media houses to expose cases of political corruption in government when their party is in power. Besides, these media owners often employ people who are loyal to their political parties. As indicated earlier, this finding is broadly consistent with previous observations (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Zoido, 2004; Mutebi, 2008; Vaidya, 2005; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011) that media privatization and press freedom in and of themselves do not necessarily guarantee the performance of watchdog functions by the private mass media.

7.8 Summary

This chapter has examined ways in which the private mass media have contributed to the problem of political corruption in Ghana. The results indicate that corruption and propaganda in the mass media, failure to do follow-up reporting and investigative journalism, biased reporting due to business and political connections, and ownership interests compromise any serious fight against political corruption. These findings demonstrate that the private mass media can add to the problem of political corruption by failing to perform their watchdog functions. The next chapter investigates structural and agency forces that influence the role of the private media in Ghana.

CHAPTER 8

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN GHANA

8.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters investigated ways in which the private media have either contributed to tackling or worsening political corruption in Ghana. Based on research questions three and four, this chapter examines the factors that have either encouraged or discouraged media watchdogging against political corruption in Ghana. Participants in this study cited two categories of factors that shape the watchdog role of the private mass media in Ghana: (1) those that promote the media's watchdog role and (2) those that undermine the media's media watchdog role. This chapter analyzes in greater depth these factors.

8.2 Factors Promoting Media Watchdog Role

This section examines participants' views and experiences in response to this question: "What conditions (factors) have promoted private mass media's watchdog role against political corruption in Ghana?" All the participants stated that some structural and agency factors have promoted private mass media watchdogging against political corruption. On the structural front, the participants talked about the enabling political climate – the promulgation of the 1992 constitution – and the very nature of political competition in a multi-party constitutional democracy, and democratic freedoms, such as free speech and press freedom. On the other hand, private media ownership characteristics, media competition for listenership and personal motivations of media practitioners and owners are some of the non-structural factors that have encouraged media watchdogging against political corruption in Ghana. This section discusses in more detail these findings.

8.2.1 Democratic Freedoms

The democratic space in Ghana has provided a favorable political climate, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the repeal of the criminal libel law and the liberalization of the media and the economy for the private media practice. One male academic provided this summary:

The liberalization of the Ghanaian economy, then the 1992 constitution that created the democratic space ushered in 1993, the bill of rights in the constitution that provides free speech, free assembly, and the repeal of the criminal libel made the media space freer and less afraid of doing some of this investigative journalism. So the democratic space, the constitution, the enabling political environment that we have that allows for civil societies, the citizens and the media to work. One of the things that I like is that people can get up in the morning to call radio stations

and speak their mind. Whether you agree with or not, they have just spoken their mind. As to whether it will be heard or not is another thing. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

Such narratives indicate that the transition to democratic rule and its associated freedoms have created fertile ground for the private mass media to hold the political leadership accountable in Ghana.

The content of the 1992 constitution and the responsibility that it imposes on the media, as enshrined in Article 162(5) (Republic of Ghana, 1996), have also contributed to the encouragement of private mass media to be involved in the fight against political corruption. One male journalist study elaborated:

The conditions are the law because our constitution says the media should play a watchdog role. And as you know in other parts of the world, the media is there to ensure that society thrives and develops and those in positions of trust, public positions, are held accountable. So I believe the 1992 constitution has emboldened the media to take up and play its watchdog role effectively in Ghana. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

These excerpts from the interview transcripts show that the 1992 constitution has been the significant impetus to the media's efforts in demanding government accountability by creating the necessary conditions, such as a free press free speech and freedom of association and assembly.

These findings indicate that the promulgation of 1992 constitution has provided democratic freedoms and created the enabling political climate for pursuing media watchdogging against political corruption. The freedom of the press – consolidated by the repeal of the criminal libel law – has been an essential motivating factor for the critical watchdog role of the private mass media in Ghana today. Media houses and practitioners can criticize and expose political corruption in government without any fear of arbitrary arrest, prosecution and imprisonment, which characterized the military regime before Ghana's transition to the democratic rule in 1993. This observation is consistent with the existing literature (Coronel, 2008; Mutebi, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 2002; Srivastava, 2016; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). Coronel (2008), for example, argues that democracy provides room for press freedom as an important pre-condition for the critical watchdog role of the private mass media to ensure democratic accountability.

The results also indicate that the freedom of speech, association, and assembly has also facilitated performance of the watchdog functions of the private mass media. Before the current

democratic governance in Ghana, a culture of silence prevailed in which media houses, journalists and citizens were afraid to demand government accountability (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Asare, 2009; Disah, 2008). In contrast, the constitution of Ghana guarantees the human and political freedom, galvanizing journalists and citizens alike to keep the government on its toes to ensure a responsive and responsible democratic governance. As a result of free speech, for example, people can call in to live radio programs to bring into the public domain issues of political corruption. These democratic freedoms are prerequisites for the performance of media watchdog functions, as documented in the literature (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Asare, 2009; Coronel, 2008; Disah, 2008; Jarso, 2010; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Rajak, 2014). Findings from previous studies in Ghana also show that the current democratic dispensation has ensured human and political freedoms for media and civil societies to operate free from government control (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Asare, 2009; Dzisah, 2008). These freedoms have motivated the pursuit of critical media investigations intended to hold political leaders accountable.

8.2.2 Political Competition

The political competition for power has partly created favorable conditions for the performance of the media watchdog role against political corruption. One male academic and journalist in this study explained these conditions.

The very nature of political competition also encourage people to be looking out for faults in the Ghanaian politics and so this idea of looking out for faults is making people monitor their opponents using the media platforms. So people have become conscious that when they are voting, they are not voting for personalities but they are voting for development projects as well. So if a member of parliament is voted into power, people expect a certain corresponding development such as the provision of water. And when these things are not forthcoming, people call on radio stations and complain, for example, that in our area the roads are so bad and the radio stations will call that MP. (Quartey, November 8, 2017).

Similar to this view on how political competition facilitates the work of the private mass media in fighting political corruption in Ghana, another academic participant explained the influence of the media on the government:

They (the media), those who are in opposition, are keeping the government on their toes. That is what lures them. They want to expose the government so that they can come in; their party can come to power. (Fosu, November 6, 2017).

Journalists confirmed the academics' views about the positive impact of political competition on the critical media watchdog role. As one female journalist in this study noted:

First, I think when it comes to politics, it is opposition parties, for instance, in our last general elections, we were getting a lot of information from sources from the perceived opposition parties. So basically it's the opposition parties that do scrutinize government contracts and so forth and give information about shady deals to media outlets to publish it. (Akweteiwaa, November 8, 2017).

Thus, the political competition has motivated the private media aligned with the main opposition party to expose political corruption to discredit the government in power and pave the way for the opposition party to come to power.

The findings show that political competition in democratic settings like Ghana has motivated the opposition parties to be on the constant lookout for government faults, including political corruption, and to expose them using the private mass media. This practice of searching for and uncovering political corruption in government by the opposition political parties has promoted the watchdog functions of the private mass media in Ghana. This finding corroborates the existing literature (Fell, 2005). As Fell (2005) shows, political competition via multi-party elections and media liberalization has contributed to fighting political corruption in Taiwan. Fell (2005) observes that opposition parties take advantage of the mass media to expose and challenge the incumbent on corruption scandals. The democratic political competition facilitates a collaborative work between the mass media and political parties to expose political corruption.

8.2.3 The Role of Individuals & Civil Society Organizations

The role of citizens and civil society organizations is critical in fighting political corruption (Akinyemi, 2016; Ukase & Audu, 2015; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, 2013a). As expected, individuals and civil society organizations have supported the private mass media to perform their watchdog functions. They do so by leaking information about corruption to media houses, defending media rights and freedoms and conducting research to drive media conversations around political corruption. These actors have partly created the enabling conditions for the performance of media watchdog role by fighting for media freedoms. One male academic in the study had this to say:

The last important point is the public support for press freedom or the public's defense of the right of the media to do their work. So it is difficult for any government to touch the media and think that they will go scot free. Indeed, the public attitude to media that are trying to cover up corruption or that are trying to protect the corrupt or that are fighting those exposing corruption is strong. And so all of these, I think, and maybe much more contribute to enabling the media to do their work against corruption. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

In supporting this viewpoint about how the public and civil society organizations have supported the work of the private mass media to perform their watchdog functions, one male politician explained the situation like this:

Besides, the Ghanaians themselves are media-friendly. So they open up to the media and collaborate a lot. They give information, and they respect the media a lot. So freedom of expression as a result of democracy and the Ghanaians' acceptance and recognition of the media have contributed to creating a positive climate for journalism to grow. (Kwame, October 26, 2017).

These excerpts demonstrate the role of citizens in defending media freedoms and acknowledging their contributions in the fight against political corruption to encourage them to do more.

The research work of the non-governmental anti-corruption organizations has also motivated the media to be at the forefront in fighting political corruption in Ghana. One male academic in the study put it this way:

The next factor is also, again precisely because of the democratic environment, the emergence and the activities of civil society organizations (NGOs), think tanks and so on which conduct research and also come out with findings of corruption. For instance, there is the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition that brings together so many different civil society organizations. They are also exposing corruption issues and fighting corruption issues. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

These anti-corruption civil society organizations conduct anti-corruption research and collaborate with the private mass media to reach out to the broader audience. As a result of this partnership, the private media can capitalize on this partnership work to stimulate anti-corruption discourse around political corruption.

As one journalist reported, the private media also obtain information from sources such as individuals and civil society organizations:

Sometimes we also get information from ordinary people who have visited government ministries, agencies and departments and observed that something wrong is going on and sometimes when you follow up the lead, you get the information to publish it (Akweiteiwaa, November 8, 2017).

The works of individual citizens and anti-corruption civil society organizations have supported private media to play a watchdog role against political corruption in Ghana. This finding extends previous research, which indicates that the mass media act as a whistleblower (Jarso, 2010) and a center for both state and non-state actors to lodge complaints about corruption for political attention (Arnold & Lal, 2012). Given that there is no right to information law in Ghana, these

non-state actors have been a significant source of information for private media to pursue an anti-corruption agenda.

The results demonstrate that civil society organizations and individuals has stimulated the private mass media to assert their watchdog role against political corruption in Ghana. By the prevailing civil and political liberties linked to democratic constitutional rule, civil society organizations and individuals have relentlessly defended private mass media rights and freedoms to boost media watchdog functions against government wrongdoings, including political corruption. One classic example is the Media Foundation for West Africa (2017a), which has been at the forefront of fighting for the rights and freedoms of the press so that the media can honor their social responsibilities to society and foster democratic accountability.

Civil society organizations research corruption and collaborate with the private mass media in conveying their (civil society organizations') findings to the public and to provoke national discussions and pressurize state authorities to address the problem. Typical examples include the works of the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), which has its headquarters in Accra (Ghana) and the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC). In addition, the Media Foundations for West Africa – headquartered in Accra (Ghana) – has also been instrumental in promoting press freedom and motivating the mass media to advance democratic accountability in the West African sub-region (Media Foundations for West Africa, 2017a). This organization, for example, offers an annual award to journalists who have advanced political accountability (Media Foundations for West Africa, 2017b). These observations extend previous research findings (Aderonum, 2011; Johnston, & Kpundeh, 2004; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, 2013a; Rose-Ackerman, 2002). Mungiu-Pippidi (2013) urges civil societies, including independent media, to collaborate in the struggles against political corruption. She suggests that top government officials do not often submit to anti-corruption reforms willingly until the pressure from below to do so is irresistible (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, 2013a). In this sense, in light of the current findings, the anti-corruption partnerships and collaborations among individuals, civil societies, and the media are promising in the Ghanaian context.

8.2.4 The Role of the State Anti-Corruption Institutions

The work of the state anti-corruption institutions, including the auditor general's department, has encouraged the private media to undertake critical political corruption reporting to foster government accountability. As one male academic participant pointed out,

Another factor is the establishment of certain public institutions such as CHRA. CHRA by its existence encourages people to feel emboldened to deal with corruption. Secondly, the public accounts committee of parliament by its existence and by the work it does also help the media to have the courage to fight corruption. Also, in the fourth republic, the auditor's general's report comes out very regularly more than before. And that is a public document by a public, state agency, and in there are many cases of corruption or potential corruption, and that sources of information make it easier also for the media to expose corruption. If the media don't expose what is in the auditor general's report, no citizens would know because most citizens are not going to read the auditor general's report. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

Another participant who is a journalist shared a similar:

We have auditor general's report that talk about how [some] people waste the nation's resources. Hitherto, those documents were not discussed, but today the private media outlets have helped in discussing and publicizing these reports for the necessary action to be taken. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

Government ministries and departments help leak information about alleged cases of political corruption to the private mass media. One female journalist explained it this way:

Journalists can also get information from sources in the ministries and government agencies and departments that think that something right is not being done and the media needs to know and expose it for government to do something about it. (Akweiteiwaa, November 8, 2017).

The above extracts confirm that some the work of some state anti-corruption institutions help the private mass media to obtain information about allegations of political corruption.

In the absence of the right to information law in Ghana, this leakage of information about suspected political corruption scandals to trusted media outlets for publication has facilitated media watchdog functions. Similarly, the activities of the state anti-corruption organizations, including the Auditor General's reports and the public accounts committee of parliament, have encouraged the mass media to facilitate conversations about political corruption. The Auditor General's annual reports, which provide information about cases of political corruption and general misappropriation of public funds, enable the mass media to spark a national dialogue around this social problem. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice investigates alleged cases of political corruption and make recommendations to the government. Coronel (2008) argues that democratic governance usually provides functional institutional arrangements and a hospitable environment for the pursuit of government accountability. The work

of the Auditor General's Department and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice can be situated within these broader assemblages of constitutional arrangements for ensuring political accountability.

8.2.5 Historical Legacies

National histories have positively impacted the watchdog role of private mass media against corruption. One male anti-corruption activist offered the following explanation:

Historical factors have contributed to the media's fight against corruption. Ghana before the 1992 democratic transition had the long spell of what they called the culture of silence, and therefore when we returned to the democratic constitutional rule in the early part, the ability to speak against the establishment or unearth certain wrongdoing was associated with certain bravery. So some media persons went into the investigative journalism to unearth rots to satisfy their egos. Media people were seen as stars or heroes. The more they expose corruption, the more they were celebrated. (Kwasi, November 2, 2017).

One academic participant also confirmed the historical impetus to the private mass media's involvement in fighting Ghanaian political corruption:

It is also important to note that the Ghanaian media itself has struggled through, and there is a history of how Ghanaian media, colonial and post-colonial period, where Ghanaian media was known for doing some of these daring things not in fighting corruption but fighting colonialism, fighting dictatorship. Some like Kwaku Baako going underground to write during PNDC regime to challenge the state and its officials. So I think we should give credit not only to the liberalization but also to the bravery of the Ghanaian journalists to fight through to create the enabling space and opportunities for citizens. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

The history of the private media in fighting for the public interests during the colonial era to date continues to strengthen their resolve to play a watchdog role in contemporary Ghanaian politics.

The findings show that Ghana's historical legacies in which the private mass media advance public interests through the colonial and post-colonial epochs have motivated today's media watchdog functions. In the colonial era, the private mass media stood their ground to challenge the colonial administration on any matter that they thought would not serve the interests of the colonized, as previous studies in Ghana have documented (Aikins, 2013; Arthur, 2010; Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Asare, 2009; Dzisah, 2008). This historical spirit has continued to galvanize some private mass media outlets into fighting political corruption today in Ghana's Fourth Republic. However, the literature has not explicitly captured this role of the historical legacies in motivating the performance of media watchdog functions.

8.2.6 Mass Media Competition

The media competition for listenership and readership has encouraged private mass media to serve public interests by fighting corruption to enjoy public patronage. As one male student participant noted,

The liberalization of the media has helped in the fight against corruption as the media houses compete to be the best in attracting listenership and to be seen as serving the interests of society (Yeboah, November 2, 2017).

One female academic participant painted a similar picture:

You have in some instances media houses that encourage their journalists to play a watchdog role because it gives them prestige and it signals that they are serious, they are doing serious stories (Dzifa, October 26, 2017).

These interview excerpts confirm how the media competition stimulates media watchdog functions.

This media proliferation has created intense competition among the private mass media outlets for listenership and readership. As a result of this competition, some private mass media houses believe that if the public see them as serving their interests, it will boost the house's listenership and readership and raise their popularity, sales and advertising revenues. This finding is consistent with previous observations (Sowunmi et al., 2010; Suphachalasai, 2005). Suphachalasai (2005), for example, observes that mass media have an interest in exposing corruption to gain fame and garner a broad audience to attract advertising contracts and make profits.

8.2.7 Media Ownership and Management

Media ownership and management are important factors that shape the media's decision to fight or not to fight corruption. One male academic participant argued the following:

The whole idea of exposing corruption by the media depends on the owners and the managers of the media organization involved. If Joy FM is a leading exponent of corruption, it is because the owner himself supports the investigative work to expose corruption. He takes a personal interest in protecting the journalists who are doing the anti-corruption work, who are doing investigative reporting work. He protects them both against other staff who will always want to do things to undermine investigative reporters and also protects the investigative journalists from external pressure and attack. So it depends on the managers and owners of the media – that is the bottom line. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

Other participants concurred with this view, and one investigative journalist elaborated:

I think we have a CEO and management that are committed to the true ethics of journalism. Some of the stories I do, I cannot do them in any media house. The good news is that here when you do the story, they do not put pressure on you to drop any story even if it affects their income. We have done stories that people came to withdraw their adverts, and I have done stories about people who are friends with the CEO of the company [Joy] and never did he ask me to stop. I have done stories that he was prevailed upon to intervene and stop the publication, but he would not do it. So when you have such management, you are emboldened to go ahead and do your story. Some of my colleagues tell me that they would do some stories, and their management would just throw the stories away, but here it does not happen like that. So that is the biggest advantage we have. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

Both these excerpts show that if managers and media owners are committed to anti-corruption efforts, their organizations are more likely to act as media watchdogs. This finding is consistent with previous observations (Sowunmi et al., 2010; Suphachalasai, 2005). Suphachalasai (2005), for example, observes that the mass media have an interest in exposing corruption to gain fame and garner a broad audience to sell their products and make a profit. As discussed earlier, this study shows that media competition has also stimulated Ghanaian media watchdog functions, with some private mass media houses encouraged to serve public interests including fighting political corruption to obtain and maintain public patronage.

8.2.8 Other Forms of Motivation

Other forms of motivation that shape the watchdog role of private media ranged from patriotism to the public celebration of media practitioners who expose political corruption. One male academic participant explained it this way:

Then also the whole profession is very attractive. I mean you get into it, and people listen to you. Most people want to get into the media profession and when you talk and you expose corruption, and you are contributing to policy change and review, you will be celebrated and acknowledged. So public recognition of the media persons making contributions to society by way of exposing and fighting has also helped. So the professional call and societal recognition have been the contributory factors to the media persons wanting to fight against corruption. (Fosu, November 6, 2017).

Other participants from the five categories of people interviewed painted a similar picture of other forms of motivation for performing the media's watchdog responsibilities to society. The attractiveness of the media profession has encouraged some media practitioners to be involved in fighting corruption to enjoy prestige linked to public endorsement of their watchdog roles against political corruption.

As described by one academic participant, some media practitioners have been involved in the fight against political corruption to advance their own interests:

People are using the media to promote their interests not necessarily for financial gain but for self-esteem, to boost their career. I think that they can have other benefits, not necessarily financial, contacts with ministers, and MPs for example that also open other doors for journalists. The mere fact that the media, especially the radio which has become so linked up with the parties, the parties will way of rewarding their faithful journalists such as offering sponsorship or scholarship so to speak. (Quartey, November 8, 2017).

Most participants shared this view on other factors encouraging media watchdog role in Ghana. One journalist put it this way:

There had been many examples of hosts of political program discussions who have become MPs, and who had landed themselves high profile political appointments because, during their practice in the media landscape, they apparently did the bidding of political parties to which they are affiliated when it came to discussions of political corruption issues. They work to create a positive image of their political parties while denting the image of other parties. (Agyemang, November 3, 2017).

These excerpts indicate that several factors motivate journalist to contribute to the fight against political corruption. Some journalists, for example, expose political corruption to build national prestige. Some also try to unmask corruption in government so that the parties they support can win political power. These journalists may secure appointments or funding to establish their private media stations when, as previously discussed, the party they support eventually gains political power. Some journalists also see their work as a calling that requires them to serve society by, for example, exposing political corruption. In contrast, other participants believed that a sense of national patriotism had motivated some media practitioners to fight political corruption. One male academic participant offered the following insight:

Then also the individual patriotism for the nation is one of the factors. The desire to generate content can also push some journalists to want to fight corruption. The reason media persons would want to fight corruption is that it has become endemic and so those seen as fighting corruption are celebrated. (Fosu, November 6, 2017).

Another female academic participant expressed a similar point about how national patriotic sentiments stimulate the media's watchdog role:

You may have one or two people who stand up as people who will expose graft and mostly because of the kind of upbringing they have been given and their perspective on society otherwise the media as a collective, I am not sure. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

These interview excerpts demonstrate that media practitioners are motivated by various interests – both selfish and public – to tackle Ghanaian political corruption.

Despite the importance of personal-level motivations in dictating the actual performance of media watchdog functions, Colonel (2008) notes that researchers investigating media watchdog role tend to focus only on structural factors, including press freedom and access to information. The current findings support the literature (Colonel, 2008; Phiri, 2008; Ostini & Fung, 2002; Suphachalasai, 2005), which emphasizes both the structural and agency factors as predictors of the media's conduct and role.

8.3 Factors Compromising Media Watchdog Role

This section discusses factors that have compromised media watchdogging against political corruption. It examines research participants' responses to this question: "What factors have compromised private mass media's watchdog functions in tackling political corruption in Ghana?" According to the research participants, partisanship (political affiliation), ownership interests, lack of professionalism and lack of financial independence have undermined the media watchdog role in Ghana. Other factors include poverty and greed, limited access to information and corruption within the media.

8.3.1 Poverty & Greed

Participants admitted that poor salaries and general working conditions including lack of security of tenure, particularly in less established media outlets had affected private mass media's watchdog role. The participants, however, added that secure and well-paid journalists from established media houses engage in corruption. One male academic elaborated:

The journalists are not well-paid, but those media that are very important and influential and who, if they expose corruption, would make a greater impact, their journalists are paid decently. Generally, journalists who are not paid well belong to small, small-scale owners, small radio stations around the country, in the district many of whom don't pay anything. And of course in Accra, there are few of such stations. But those radio stations, newspapers, who can make impact and influence, they pay their reporters decently like any average salary of any public officer or even better. I am saying that it is an issue, but it is not an excuse for not doing their work. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

Another journalist put it this way:

There is another category of journalists who are also well paid but still want more, and so they succumb to the political parties' offer of some package to do their bidding (Agyemang, November 2, 2017).

Other participants expressed a similar view about the adverse effects of greed on the media watchdog role. Their words show that well-paid journalists still engage corruption as they seek to accumulate wealth by any means possible. These observations indicate that poverty or poor remuneration is not the major driver of corruption within the media.

Most participants stated that monetary gain has been the prime factor affecting the media's watchdog functions. As another journalist in this study strongly confirmed,

The motivation is money, financial and material gains. The motivation has always been that way. I won't sit here and create a rosy picture as somebody would try to do if you interview them. That is not how it works in Ghana. The media here is highly corrupt. It is a fact. Nobody can doubt that. (Tagoe, November 8, 2017).

These excerpts from the interview transcripts show that the search for material and financial gains at all cost has hindered media's watchdog functions. Poverty or poor remuneration is not the major driver of corruption within the media.

Consistent with the literature, poverty based on poor remunerations has been found by the literature to compromise the media's role in tackling political corruption (Jarso, 2010; Omojola, 2010; Sowumu et al., 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza). In Uganda, Wasswa and Kakooza (2011) report that poverty among journalists and poor remunerations in less established media organizations are one of the obstacles to the media's commitment to fighting corruption in the country. Similarly, media corruption – driven by poverty and poor compensations – has limited the media's ability to expose corruption and demand democratic accountability in Nigeria (Omojola, 2010; Sowumu et al., 2010), and Kenya (Jarso, 2010). The current finding, however, takes a new twist because well-paid journalists who can make a huge difference in fighting corruption have also abandoned their professional journalistic standards in their quests for wealth accumulation. Although poverty and poor compensations can lure media practitioners into corruption (Jarso, 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011), well-paid influential journalists also commit acts of corruption due to greed. Participants also maintained that some of these influential journalists had been put on government and business payrolls to be paid for defending their (paymasters') cause fairly or unfairly. This finding indicates that fair compensation, in and of itself, cannot convince journalists to commit themselves to anti-corruption efforts.

8.3.2 Lack of Financial Independence

Most participants reported that some private mass media outlets' depend on financing from government or business, which has compromised the watchdog role of the private mass media.

There have been instances in which government, for example, has threatened to withdraw or has withdrawn advertisements from media houses for exposing political corruption in government. This threat of withdrawing advertisements has become a new instrument that the government uses to control private mass media. One female student put it in this way:

Another factor is commercialization. Most media houses are funded by advertising, which is their primary source of income, especially the print media where the amount charged for a newspaper is far less than the cost of printing the paper. What sustains this newspapers is income from advertising and through research, it is has been established that the government is the major advertiser of most print media. As the government is the major sponsor and advertiser of most media houses, they [the media] do not want to be in conflict with the government for instance by exposing political corruption. So the government of the day determines what should be in the newspaper, not by way of censorship but by way of controlling them through advertising. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

Although Ghana has no specific censorship laws to regulate news content, the above quote confirms successive governments' attempts to control the media in subtle ways, such as offering advertising contracts. One male politician supported this argument:

Another issue has to do with financing. I am not getting enough adverts to generate income to support my station, then I will align with a political party to get some largesse, and that means if there is wrongdoing going involving that party, I cannot speak to it. I will always do their bidding. There are media stations in Ghana that you dare not go there to talk about a particular political party. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

This excerpt further demonstrates government efforts to control the content of media reporting to serve private interests at the expense of the national interests. This observation shows that if the private mass media fail to please their main advertisers, including the government, they will not secure the advertising contracts and sponsorship deals that keep them in business. Unsurprisingly, participants reported several media houses had aligned with the main political parties that held political power since 1992 when the country returned to democratic rule.

Additionally, businesses are capitalizing on their ability to offer advertisement contracts as a weapon to control the media to achieve their business interests regardless of the effects on national development. As explained by one female journalist in this study, businesses accused of corruption in cahoots with the government threaten to withdraw their advertisements from the private mass media houses exposing the corruption scandal:

Yes, not only the government but also businesses and organizations that think that media houses are not helping their cause will threaten to withdraw their adverts. In fact, we have instances that you cannot carry specific stories because if you do the organizations will withdraw their adverts, which are the primary source of funding for the media. (Akweteiwaa, November 8, 2017).

One male academic shared this view:

And also because of their business interests, advertisers will also pressure them that if they continue to do this, they (advertisers) will not give those advertisements and so on. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

As these excerpts demonstrate, businesses are capturing private media to advance and protect their business interests. The private media that tend to do the bidding of the government in power and businesses tend to obtain more advertising contracts. Some private mass media have difficulty in raising enough money to support the media business, and so some media houses may have to find a way to help themselves. Private mass media's financial dependence has paved the way for both political and business capture of media houses. As the secondary data (Media Foundations for West Africa & Reporters Without Borders, 2018b) indicates, the political funding of media is as high as political control over news content in Ghana. This secondary data finding is consistent with participants' responses on the same subject. This lack of financial independence has subjected the media to political influences and control

In summary, the findings demonstrate that the lack of financial independence on the part of some struggling private mass media has negatively affected their capacity to play any meaningful watchdog role. The research participants articulated that the private mass media depend on advertisements, which is their main funding source to survive. Corrupt government officials and business entities have capitalized on their power to offer or withdraw advertising contract as a way to control the content of the private mass media reportage to serve their interests. As a result, many private mass media organizations have not been able to expose or publish political corruption scandals involving government officials who give them advertising contracts. This observation buttresses the existing literature (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Zoido, 2004; Mutebi, 2008; Sowunmi et al., 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011).

Similarly, some private mass media houses that generate insufficient income to support their operations align with the major political parties in Ghana to obtain financial support. As a result of this arrangement, such private mass media houses cannot expose wrongdoings, including

political corruption involving those political parties. As documented in the literature, this subtle control of the private media takes the form of printing contracts and secret payments (bribes) to media houses (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillan & Pablo, 2004; Mutebi, 2008; Sowunmi et al. 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011).

In the same vein, the results demonstrate that businesses control some private mass media through advertisements. These captured mass media outlets cannot expose the corruption that implicates their major business advertisers. As documented in previous studies, the inability of private media stations to be financially autonomous is one of the major factors undermining media watchdog responsibilities to the society (Besley & Prat, 2006; Colonel, 2008; Deane, 2016; Haque, 2012; Sowunmi et al., 2010). To prevent this business and political capture of the private mass media, Deane (2016) rightly argues that development partners should endeavor to fund independent and free private media that have already demonstrated a commitment to anti-corruption efforts.

8.3.3 Media Ownership Interests

As noted earlier, there are three typologies of private mass media in Ghana based on ownership characteristics. The first typology, which has no affiliation with political parties or businesses to serve their private interests, has typically demonstrated a continued commitment to anti-corruption efforts no matter the political party in power. The remaining two categories of the private mass media, in contrast, have ties with political parties, and as a result, they engage in partisan anti-corruption reportage to serve their mutual interests. The private mass media houses owned by politicians whose party is in power, for example, would not expose political corruption in government. One female journalist in this study illustrated the ownership interests and pressure:

Yes, because if I am working in a media house where the owner is affiliated to the government in power and I want to investigate this corrupt act against them, the owner tells me don't do it. You are forced not to do it. There are two things: either I stay and forget about the investigation, or I leave the work [that media house] and go and do the investigation. And probably because I don't want to lose my job, I may be compelled to forget about the investigations and stay with my job, but that should not be the case. (Ogu, November 9, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, most research participants expressed a similar view on how the media owners undermine media watchdog responsibilities. One female academic had this to say:

Some of them are partisan, and so when they are partisan, they support a particular government and therefore lend themselves to being used either to defend the

political party they are affiliated with corruptive practices or attack opposition or to attack people who raised issues about corruption. Some of them too are themselves corrupt. (Dzifa, October 26, 2017).

These excerpts from the interview transcripts demonstrate how the media ownership's links with specific political parties can hamper the watchdog role of the private mass media in Ghana.

As noted earlier, the private mass media organizations whose owners are either politicians or business people with political affiliations are often not committed to the fight against political corruption in Ghana. These private media outlets tackle corruption only when doing so would promote their parochial interests – such as exposing political corruption to discredit the government and pave the way for their preferred political party to come to power. On the other hand, pro-government mass media are used to refute allegations of political corruption leveled against ruling government officials. Making this situation worse is the growth of media ownership concentration in which one person controls several mass media outlets, which become the mouthpiece of political parties with which this owner is affiliated. Consistent with the previous literature (Beseley & Prat, 2006; Colonel, 2008; Deane, 2016; Haque, 2012; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013a), this finding indicates that media ownership interests affect the watchdog role of the private mass media.

8.3.4 Limited Access to Information

The free access to public information, which poses no security threat to the state, is indispensable in the fight against corruption to ensure transparency and accountability (African Union, 2004; Hope, 2013; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; UN, 2004). The majority of the participants in this study spoke about the difficulties in accessing the right information to fight political corruption. One politician elaborated:

Getting access to the right information is problematic. Nobody gets access to the right information so you must also fish out and you must be looking for something and doing the investigations, which may not even hit the right target. The right person to speak to the issue is not ready to talk about the issue. Therefore you cannot be making headway in getting the facts. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

An investigative journalist also emphasized the difficulty in accessing information:

The major challenge is getting information from government sources because you do not have the right to information law. So the government agencies decide whether or not to give you the information and they would not provide you with information that will incriminate them. So it makes it very difficult. And sometimes

too, media houses here operate with limited budgets, and so we are not able to go so far [i.e., taking legal action] (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

The above extracts indicate that a restricted access to public information has hampered the fight against political corruption.

The findings demonstrate that limited access to information due to the absence of the right to information law has hampered the private mass media's contribution to anti-political corruption efforts in Ghana. The right to information law makes both media's and citizens' requests for any public information – which will not compromise national security – mandatory. As a signatory to both African Union and United Nations conventions against corruption (African Union, 2004; UN, 2004), Ghana is required to have passed the Right to Information Bill as part of the preventive national anti-corruption framework. As Article nine of the African Union anti-corruption convention (2004) states, “Each State Party shall adopt such legislative and other measures to give effect to the right of access to information that is required to assist in the fight against corruption and related offenses” (p. 12). Ghana has, however, failed to implement this provision. As the findings in this study show, the difficulty in accessing public information has compromised the watchdog role of the private mass media in Ghana.

This finding corroborates the literature (Haque, 2012; Omojola, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; Vishwavidhyalaya & Bhopal, 2014) which argues that the absence of the right to information law impedes critical journalistic work as demonstrated in the Ghanaian context. The request for information in Ghana depends on the whims of the government officials, who are unlikely to release any information that incriminates them. Although the Right to Information Bill has long been drafted, it has not seen a passage in the last seventeen years for reasons that are best known to the successive governments (Government of Ghana, 2018b).

8.3.5 Poor Media Professionalism

As a profession, a journalistic practice should uphold specific standards to ensure that media reportage is objective, accurate and truthful to maintain the integrity of the media industry in the eyes of the people (Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963). In Ghana, unlike other professions such as law and medicine, people with no journalistic training have infiltrated the media organizations due to lack of entry or licensing requirements for media personnel. One female academic provided the following insight:

So the framers of the constitution somehow did not anticipate that there was going to be a period very soon after the 1992 Constitution came into effect that we were going to have a multi-media environment where there would be a multiplicity of radios and television stations. And that also goes with it a lot of challenges including untrained people finding themselves in the media and people who really have no business going into the media being in the media and doing all kinds of unethical things. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

This narrative demonstrates that people without professional journalistic knowledge have found their way into the media landscape. The professionalization of journalists is essential, so they can obtain a requisite education and training, and cultivate the habit of asserting autonomy and upholding self-regulation in the media field (Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2010; Windahl & Rosengren, 1978). Collective professionalization is another process of socialization involving the whole profession via the formation of professional associations for establishing and enforcing professional ethics to keep media practitioners in regular check (Gadzepko, 2008; Windahl & Rosengren, 1978).

Additionally, some participants, such as journalists, added that media practitioners with necessary training are not applying it in their journalistic work. One male journalist explained it this way:

If you ask me about the training, I will say the training has become more of a formality, so it is more of a cliché; just walk through, and then that is it. (Yaw, October 17, 2017).

This failure to apply journalistic training and ethics has compromised objective reporting as the professional standards require. Partisan reporting on political corruption has characterized the Ghanaian media as media houses and journalists are affiliated to political parties to advance their parochial interests. As one female student in this study reported,

Journalism needs the practitioners to be neutral, but most journalists align with political parties to achieve their political agenda or ambition. So journalists might not necessarily take money from politicians, but by their affiliation to political parties, they are less likely to expose corruption in government if the party they support is in power. So journalists may not be in for immediate money, but by declaring support for a particular party or candidate, they hope to get an appointment when that party or candidate wins power. There should be a separation between journalism and politics. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

These excerpts indicate that most media practitioners and owners do not see the media work as a calling. Instead, they view the mass media as a means of gaining popularity and riches overnight culminating in the abandonment of journalistic ethics and standards.

The results indicate that unprofessionalism has impeded the performance of the mass media's watchdog responsibilities to society. People without journalistic training have infiltrated the media organizations due to the absence of licensing requirements for media practitioners. As well, to advance their private interests, many trained media practitioners have deliberately failed to apply their journalistic training and ethics. Research participants maintained that most media practitioners do not see media work as a calling. Instead, they consider journalistic work as a means of gaining popularity and riches. This situation has led to the abandonment of journalistic ethics, including the commitment to watchdog functions. These findings are consistent with the literature on Ghana (Gadzepko, 2008) and Nigeria (Sowunmi et al., 2010). In emphasizing the need to ensure media accountability through legal requirements and self-regulation, Gadzepko (2008) argues that the media have largely failed to adhere to professional ethics in Ghana.

8.3.6 Weak Media Regulation

Related to poor media professionalism is poor state regulation of the mass media sector. The majority of the participants argued that inadequate regulation of the private mass media has hindered their watchdog functions. They contended, as well, that the lack of entry requirements for journalism has led to the proliferation of unqualified journalists. As one female academic in this study explained,

In the case of journalists precisely until we have rules about who can be a journalist and who cannot be a journalist, and what training is required for that person, what certification is he supposed to bring on board, and more importantly, what the sanctions for misbehavior are. Until we have those things spelled out, I am not sure that we have media that can fight corruption. You may have one or two people who stand up as people who will expose graft and mostly because of the kind of upbringing they have been given and their perspective on society otherwise the media as a collective, I am not sure. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

This excerpt shows that there are no specific requirements such as certification for entering the media industry compared to other professions, such as law. As a result, many people who have no professional knowledge about journalistic practice have invaded the media industry and, in pursuit of wealth, have compromised the critical watchdog role of the media.

As well as the absence of entry requirements for journalists, ineffective regulations of media houses have compromised high journalistic standards. There has been a lack of partnership between two regulatory bodies set up to regulate the media sector in Ghana. One female academic who had served on one of these regulatory bodies recounted her experience:

We have the National Communication Authority (NCA) and the National Media Commission (NMC) that are not working together. The NCA has the power to issue frequencies. Now you set up the National Media Commission, and you give them the function of ensuring high journalistic standards. But they have no sanctions. NMC and NCA should have a partnership that ensures that there are ways in which we can withdraw your license and part of the means is that the media commission tells us that you have breached all the protocols. Because when I was on the commission, journalists can refuse to appear before the commission, and all we have to do is to go to court and who have the time to do that because all the members of the commission are part-time members except the executive secretary. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017)

This lack of collaboration has compromised the effective regulation of the mass media sector given that the National Communication Authority has no authority to sanction media outlets and practitioners who are not upholding journalistic standards.

Other participants attributed the failure to implement mass media regulatory measures to partisan political interests, as emphasized by a politician:

We have the stringent regulation, but lack of enforcement is the problem. You cannot enforce it because I am the NCA director general, and I am NDC member and NDC stations are misbehaving. They are falling short of standards, but I dare not go there to ensure that the right thing is done because there are bigwigs in the party who wouldn't allow me to do just that. Because I must pay allegiance to my party in high esteem and therefore I am not in a position to sanction my party people who are misbehaving within the media landscape. So the people appointed should be allowed to work within the stipulated regulations or provisions of the constitution, but not to serve partisan interests to the detriment of the public interests. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

These political interests have compromised any reasonable attempt at regulating the mass media to make them observe their constitutional responsibilities, including fighting political corruption in Ghana.

These findings show that excessive partisanship characterizing the operations of the regulatory bodies is partly responsible for the weak regulation of the media sector in Ghana. This partisan behavior of the regulatory authorities has compromised their ability to sanitize the private mass media sector and has given rise to poor media accountability that undermines media

watchdogging. To ensure fairness and justice, the rule of law – which holds that the rules must be applied equally and fairly to all manner of persons – is an essential element in democratic societies (Fishkin, 2011; Heywood, 2012; Jackson, Venter, 2012). The attitude of the media regulatory bodies in Ghana suggests that the rule of law is weakly implemented in the entire country. Consistent with past research (Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Sowunmi et al., 2010), a selective administration of justice to favor media houses aligned with only the ruling elites is not only a threat to critical media watchdogging but also to anti-corruption efforts, in particular, and to democracy as a whole.

8.3.7 Political & Social Pressures

Participants reported that social and political pressures on the private mass media compromise their watchdog role against political corruption. One journalist put it this way:

The person knows this is what you want to investigate. You might not necessarily tell him, but maybe the person has heard it somewhere. Then the person invites you to his office and says that I have heard that you are investigating this matter. Well, I want you to put a stop to it. You know we are all in the same country, and if you do that, it will bring some form of fear and panic in the general public or anger among the citizenry. So I want you to stop and all that. So (political) interference is a problem. The threat from the powers that be also sometimes pose a problem that if you do this, I will do this to you and all that. (Ogu, November 9, 2017).

Another participant – an academic – suggested that these pressures on the private mass media relax critical anti-corruption reporting:

But if the media in an area exposes corruption in a locality, a person who is being exposed, if it is a government official or private business person, they have connections among the elites in the area. And they will come to the manager who is also a member of the elites in the area through pastors and chiefs, and so on. They will put pressure on them to stop such exposure, and that kind of thing may be a warning to all journalists in the locality that look: this issue about such and such a person, you don't touch it. Those are social influences or pressures that may be brought to bear on the media not to do their work. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

These narratives indicate that political and social pressures on media houses and journalists lead them to abandon critical investigative reporting on political corruption in Ghana.

The media houses that expose political corruption come under pressure from the sitting government. Participants, including politicians, cited many instances in which media houses that have exposed political corruption in government receive threats and attacks from the government officials, ruling political party executives and supporters. As one politician in this study noted:

Every opposition party likes Multi-Media, and every ruling government hates Multi-Media. Recently, when the NPP was in opposition, they loved Multi-Media because they would always expose corruption in government. Now that NPP is power, it is at loggerheads with the Multimedia Group because it reveals the rot in government. (Kwame, October 31, 2017).

The private media houses that cannot withstand the political and social pressures from the powerful interests in society may, therefore, decide not to fight political corruption.

The findings show that political and social pressures have impeded the watchdog functions of the private mass media. These political pressures, including government orders from above to drop political corruption investigations and publications, are well-documented (Haque, 2012; Jibo, 2003; Mafukata, 2015; Sowunmi et al., 2010; Wasswa & Kakooza, 2011). Consistent with the Freedom House's (2018) observations based on 2017 investigations, this finding shows that the private mass media in Ghana are not entirely free from political control, in contrast to some past research findings (Global Integrity Initiative, 2016). On the other hand, social pressures from religious leaders, chiefs and influential community leaders and people supporting alleged corrupt offenders are not explicitly captured in the existing literature. The findings indicate that alleged corruption suspects tend to fall back on their influential social and political networks to escape investigation and subsequent prosecution in the face of compelling evidence of criminality.

8.3.8 Cultural Orientations

Some participants stated that the socialization of Ghanaians is inherently corrupt as it fails to train people to be honest and to uphold the principles of integrity and accountability. One male journalist explained it this way:

My interest lies in the psyche of Ghanaians. Corruption is deep-rooted in our communities. I believe that we have to start from the home because charity begins at home. If parents are not corrupt in their homes, it reflects on the nation. I think that if we educate people about the negative impact that corruption has on the development of our country, it will help a lot in addressing the problem. As media practitioners, we need to drum home the need to be anti-corrupt so that it will manifest in the minds of our people and eventually on the development of our country. (Agyemang, November 3, 2017).

Other participants, such as this female student, confirmed that Ghanaian cultural orientations are inherently corrupt:

I think that we have to start with ourselves. I believe that we all corrupt or in one way or the other, we are all being corrupt. The childhood orientation is in itself corrupt. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

As these narratives show, participants believe that Ghanaian cultural orientations have undermined the watchdog functions of the private mass media.

The findings indicate that Ghanaian cultural orientations transmitted through normal socialization are inherently corrupt. These cultural orientations have undermined the media watchdog role. Some research participants argued that the glorification of wealth – regardless of whether its sources are legitimate – has gained a deep root in the Ghanaian social fabric. This development has culminated in a get-rich-quick attitude among the citizenry. This desire for wealth, whether through legal or illegal means, has infected the media profession as well and has undermined media watchdog functions in favor of personal gains, such as receiving money to stop publishing a corruption story. This finding is consistent with the prior literature (Sowunmi et al., 2010), which points to the negative impact of cultural orientations on mass media watchdog functions in Nigeria. Sankoh (1999) also observed that African cultural dispositions have contributed to the high rate of political corruption in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria.

While cultural dispositions might give rise to corruption (Barr & Serra, 2010; Sankoh, 1999; Sowunmi et al., 2010), they are not a critical factor if there are strong institutions to reward hard work and punish wrongdoings, regardless of the social status or class of the offenders (Mafukata, 2015; Klitgaard, 1988; Mbaku, 1999; Rose-Akerman, 1999). Klitgaard (1988) argues that corruption flourishes in political communities where monopoly and discretionary powers abound without the necessary structures in place to ensure accountability. Mafukata (2015) has made similar observations in the sub-Saharan African context, including Ghana where political corruption festers mainly due to the monopolization of political power in the executive arm of government without robust and enforceable structures of accountability.

8.4 Summary

This chapter has explored factors that impact the media's role in political corruption in Ghana. The factors that have motivated media watchdogging include democratic freedoms, media owners and practitioners' commitment to anti-corruption efforts, and the work of state anti-corruption agencies, individuals and civil society organizations. On the other hand, the analysis shows that interaction of partisanship, ownership interests, lack of professionalism, limited access to information, greed and poverty, lack of financial independence and media corruption have compromised the mass media watchdog functions. The next chapter focuses on how to strengthen the private mass media to be a more dominant anti-corruption force in Ghana.

CHAPTER 9

THE WAY FORWARD

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have discussed media watchdog and anti-watchdog functions and a myriad of factors that impact these different roles that the private mass media perform concerning issues of political corruption. This chapter examines ways in which the media can be better positioned to honor their watchdog responsibilities to society in tackling deep-seated problems such as political corruption. Given this objective, participants in this study were asked to respond to this question: *“How can the private mass media be strengthened to play a more effective watchdog role against political corruption in Ghana?”* Participants’ responses to this question and their final thoughts on the research problem mainly emphasized the role of (1) the private mass media, (2) government and (3) individuals and civil societies in fighting political corruption collectively. This section discusses in more detail the participants’ thoughts on these themes.

9.2 Private Mass Media

Participants made suggestions on what the mass media need to do differently and how they should be supported to be an active anti-corruption force. These suggestions focused on respect for journalistic standards, investigative journalism and follow-up reporting, professional training and support for private mass media.

9.2.1 Respect for Journalistic Standards

The majority of the participants suggested that the private mass media and practitioners should uphold journalistic standards. As one academic in this study narrated,

The Ghana Journalist Association (GJA) has a code of ethics for its members, but you see some of the private media outlets do not belong to the GJA because it is a voluntary association and therefore they can say they won’t abide by its code of ethics. We have had cases like that. I think that unionization will also help to make more journalists become members because they all want better conditions of service. So the GJA can use that as a way of trying to build a stable association and finding ways and means of ensuring compliance with the ethics of the association. (Quartey, November 8, 2017).

A female journalist made similar remarks:

So the media should be professional in how they do their job. They should not be politically affiliated. They should know their power and know how powerful they are of an instrument to fight corruption to make Ghana a better place. (Abelety, November 8, 2017).

Participants also suggested that the private media should neither condone nor engage in political corruption.

The majority of the participants suggested that to encourage an objective reportage on cases of political corruption, the private mass media should not be politically affiliated. One female put it this way:

I think the best thing for the media to do as the watchdog as they are is not to be politically affiliated because such affiliation is likely to distort their judgment or make them biased. So they should not be politically affiliated. Even if you are politically affiliated, that should not prevent from condemning something that is not right. (Abelety, November 8, 2017).

These excerpts from the interview transcripts suggest that private mass media should be devoid of political affiliation. As one renowned communications scholar, Dr. Audrey Gadzekpo, once said, “They must maintain editorial independence and assert their right to take editorial decisions according to conscience and codes of conduct and avoid selectivity in exposing corruption in public life” (see Modern Ghana, 2009, p. 2). This secondary source of data confirms the above qualitative findings on the need for the mass media to discontinue the practice of biased reporting on political corruption.

The results show that the private mass media’s respect for journalistic ethics is at low ebb because of the prevalence of media corruption, political affiliations and partisanship reporting. Hence, the private mass media should discontinue these unethical practices and become more relevant to anti-corruption efforts in Ghana. As the literature indicates, to tackle corruption, the mass media should ensure a high level of professionalism and accountability through self-regulation or self-discipline (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013a; Stapenurst, 2000; Srivastava, 2016).

9.2.2 Investigative Journalism & Follow-Up Reporting

Given the weak state of investigative journalism in Ghana, the research participants recommended that the private mass media should have an investigative department for anti-corruption reporting. As one investigative journalist emphasized,

A lot of them do not have an investigative desk. The day-to-day reporting often relies on findings by the auditor general, and when it is discussed at the parliament’s public accounts committee hearing, that is when the media feeds on them or once in a while when a document gets leaked or something like that. There should be a deliberate effort to set up an investigative desk in media houses, and they should be funded. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

Another journalist in this study expressed a similar point:

Media houses should sponsor their people to do anti-corruption investigative journalism. Media houses if they have the resources, should train more of their personnel to learn more about the modern ways and techniques of investigation to enable them to investigate issues. For example, there has been a new government. You will hear them making a lot of allegations, and the media feeds on those allegations, and it is the same people who make the allegations that are spoken to. And then we go to the other side to seek their response to such allegations or their side of the story, and they end there. I believe it is better for us to pick those issues, take our time, investigate them thoroughly and then we can provide the other side of those allegations. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

According to these participants, the private mass media have been encouraged to investigate political-corruption issues and provide an objective reportage rather than depending solely on information based on allegations of corruption and counter-allegations from politicians. The results show that investigative journalism is very weak in Ghana. As indicated in the literature, this situation allows political corruption to thrive without exposure and those involved to escape prosecution and sanction (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Gray, 2015; Stapenhurst, 2000; Srivastava, 2016).

The participants, including politicians and journalists, reported that private mass media should do a follow-up reporting on political corruption issues to ensure that the authorities resolve them. One journalist provided the following insight:

The media needs to do follow-up journalism. There have been many instances in which we bring critical issues to bear and discuss them for a week or two, and we think that we have brought them to the public domain and then leave them there without getting the right results. We don't do a follow-up to check whether the law enforcement agencies have dealt with the issues. So if we can do follow-up journalism, it will put the law enforcement agencies on their toes to do their work more efficiently in addressing the corruption issues raised because we can ask questions if the right thing is not being done. (Agyemang, November 3, 2017).

As this extract demonstrates, the private mass media fail to do follow up anti-corruption reporting. This situation has relaxed relevant authorities, who, as soon as the media stop their coverage, cease from enforcing anti-corruption laws. As indicated in other studies, to pressure government authorities to address the problem, the private mass media should actively pursue cases of political corruption (Arnold & Lal, 2012; Gray, 2015; Jarso, 2010).

9.2.3 Professional Training

The research participants emphasized that to address political corruption, media practitioners need the requisite training and professionalism. One politician explained it this way:

The media practitioners should have proper training. Today I will hardly say that we have the right caliber of media practitioners because everybody is joining the media profession because of the unavailability of jobs. So everybody who can read, write and speak anything is calling himself or herself a media practitioner. So if the right training is given, it can help. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

Other participants emphasized the need for professional training. For example, a male journalist had this to say:

In every profession, you need fresher courses, because, at every given time, situations differ. Certain practices that we do now were not done then. For example, Ghana Journalist Association (GJA) code of ethics says that sometimes if I am looking for specific information of public interest and I can only go uncover to obtain that information, there is nothing wrong with it. A lot of gadgets are coming up for this purpose, and so the training is critical to improving and updating the journalistic skills. So there should a lot of media training (Asare, October 30, 2017).

These excerpts show that necessary training and adherence to professional standards are critical

This finding indicates that many media practitioners in Ghana lack the necessary journalistic training, which hampers their ability to meet journalistic standards, including the watchdog function. As documented in the literature, these untrained media practitioners should, therefore, acquire the appropriate training, so they can function as professional journalists to help fight against political corruption (Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010). According to the results of the current study, this training should include regular refresher courses to update and improve journalistic knowledge and information on the sophisticated new technology used in investigative journalism.

9.2.4 Support for the Media

The participants said that funding should be made available to free and independent mass media outlets that are already committed to proper anti-corruption investigation and reporting. A male academic explained why:

Those media that are already engaged in exposing and fighting corruption will continue, and they are the ones we must keep supporting. If the media ownership is as it is, we cannot expect much from many sectors of the media. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

Other participants, such as this male academic, confirmed this call for media support:

Resources, financial resources are one because it is a tough job, you need to have some system support, legal support, and security to ensure protection, skills, and collaboration in the sense that one journalist cannot do it all. It also takes time to do it. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

These excerpts show that investigative reporting on political corruption requires resources that are beyond the reach of some private media houses. Some participants, like this male journalist, argued that these resources should include legal support:

Then the press doesn't have that stronger association to legally defend journalists and media houses for stories that they do in cases where they have been sued, or there is a threat of being sued. The absence of a stronger mother association hampers the work of the media. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

As these extracts suggest, the availability of this legal support can encourage the private media and journalists to do investigative reporting.

The support for the media could come from both government and non-government sectors. The government, for example, could set up a fund administered by an independent body to support the private media that is already doing well in leading anti-corruption investigations. One female academic described how this might work:

They should make money available and determine who should, a more independent body who should disburse the funds otherwise pretty soon it will be corrupted. You cannot criticize the government if it is the one giving out the money. We come back to the same place he who pays the piper calls the tune. So it is for them to make the funds available but to set up mechanisms to disburse the fund, mechanisms that allow those who make these decisions to be insulated from governmental control. Funding in a way that does not compromise the integrity of media houses can help. (Dzifa, October 26, 2017).

Funding the media should be done in such a way that they can maintain their freedom and independence to play their watchdog functions.

Other participants, such the academic quoted below, added that the private mass media and practitioners could be given awards to motivate them to do more:

If they are rewarded, for instance, in their organizations, if their managers reward them by promotion, by increasing their salaries, by bonuses, and things like that, and then also by external organizations giving them awards and citations might motivate them. But also I think if we have a government that is truly committed to fighting corruption, they can institute some award or public honor for such persons to encourage many more other journalists to want to do that. This will be very significant that even the government acknowledges that the fight against corruption by the media is important. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

Participants urged the government to institutionalize some form of annual awards to celebrate outstanding investigative reporting against political corruption as a demonstration of its

endorsement of investigative journalism in Ghana. Non-governmental organizations can equally take up this challenge as the Media Foundations for West Africa is doing (Fieldwork, 2017).

Some participants, like this journalist, also suggested that the media practitioners should receive fair remuneration:

I think there must be a structure in place to address the remuneration of journalists. If journalists are given decent pay, I think the risk of journalists accepting money or anything in kind to work for a particular party will be lowered. (Agyemang, November 2, 2017).

This participant argued for better working conditions, including compensation, to encourage media practitioners to give their best in helping to fight corruption in Ghana.

The findings show that the private mass media already doing well in conducting anti-corruption investigative journalism should be supported. As Deane (2016) argues, strategic plans and sustainable means of support for media independence to prevent co-option by powerful corrupt entities and actors are urgently required. Deane's (2016) finding is consistent with developments in Ghana since the private mass media are increasingly becoming more vulnerable to the very people whom they are supposed to hold to account.

9.3 The Role of the Government

According to the participants in this study, the government should demonstrate a practical commitment to anti-corruption efforts by ensuring media regulation, the rule of law, the right to information law, well-resourced independent anti-corruption agencies and a critical review of the legal framework.

9.3.1 Media Regulation

Participants suggested that the government should properly regulate the mass media sector. They argued that partisan interests should not drive the licensing of the private mass media. They emphasized that a partnership between the National Communication Authority and the National Media Commission is critical to effectively regulating the media. As one female academic noted,

The National Communication Authority and the National Media Commission should have a partnership that ensures that there are ways in which we can withdraw your license and part of the methods is that the media commission tells us that you have breached all the protocols, then we take it away from you. Because when I was on the commission, journalists can refuse to appear before the commission, and all we have to do is to go to court and who have the time to do that because all the members of the commission are part-time members apart from the executive secretary. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

This excerpt shows that collaborative work between these two regulatory bodies will help to raise media standards in Ghana. For example, if the National Media Commission establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that a particular media station has breached media standards and regulations, the National Communication Authority which issues media license should withdraw the radio frequency of that media outlet.

As seen in the following quotation by a female academic, participants also suggested the need for entry requirements for journalists:

In the case of journalists specifically we should have rules about who can be a journalist and who cannot be a journalist, and what training is required for that person, what certification is he supposed to bring on board, and more importantly, what the sanctions for misbehavior are. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

Another participant, a politician, suggested that the regulatory bodies should also be made more independent and free to do their work without political pressures or considerations:

You cannot enforce it because I am the NCA director general and NDC member. Because I must pay allegiance to my party in high esteem, and therefore I am not in a position to sanction NDC stations that are misbehaving and falling short of standards, So maybe the appointing authority has to be looked at so that they appoint people and allow them to work within the stipulated regulations or provisions of the constitution but not to serve partisan interests to the detriment of the public interests. In this way, media houses that misbehave can be sanctioned based on law and not be allowed to go scot-free because they belong to the party in government. (Boateng, October 17, 2017).

Thus, according to the participants, effective regulation of the mass media without political partisanship will strengthen the private mass media, allowing them to assert their watchdog role against political corruption.

The results show that government interferes with the operations of the media regulatory bodies in Ghana to promote partisan political interests through the appointment of party loyalists to head these institutions. As a result of the party connections, regulatory agencies do not sanction the pro-government media outlets that misbehave. The government should stop interfering with the work of the National Communication Authority and National Media Commission (NMC) by not appointing party loyalists to head these authorities. To produce and sustain media accountability, these regulatory bodies should also collaborate to ensure adequate management of the media sector. The literature emphasizes the need for media accountability through regulation (Haque, 2012; Jarso, 2010).

9.3.2 The Rule of Law

First, virtually all the participants reported that successive governments had mostly failed to enforce the anti-corruption laws fairly and equally when doing so would affect their colleagues, members of the executive and their allies. As one female student participant emphasized,

The government in power often do not deal with government officials whose alleged corrupt practices have been exposed. In fact, the government often attempts to shield its corrupt officials. The government will say that they are investigating the issue and they will later come out to say that there is not enough evidence to prosecute the alleged corrupt officials. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

This interview excerpt indicates that the government is not keen on investigating and prosecuting top executive members and their allies. As noted earlier, media houses and journalists argued that dissatisfactory government responses to cases of political corruption serve as disincentives to critical media watchdogging, including investigative reporting.

In light of poor government responses to dealing with political corruption, the majority of participants suggested that the government should uphold the rule of law to ensure that lawbreakers face the full rigors of the law without fear or favor. As one female academic in this study commented:

The rules must be applied fairly. People, whether they are at the top or bottom should know that they are not above the law. When we begin to do that, then we will do that which is right. But now it looks as if the money you have that determines whatever [everything] but as to how people get the money, nobody is interested. But we should be interested in how people get their money because, in the end, they are stealing from all of us. Yes, we have beautiful laws. The structures are there but let us strengthen and revamp them. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

This excerpt echoes the need for implementing the rule of law in Ghana as part of the measures to address political corruption. The rule of law must be seen working – the laws must be implemented and should be applied equally and fairly to all manner of persons regardless of their status in society. The government has been urged to ensure the rule of law in the strictest sense by implementing and enforcing the laws equally and fairly to all people without any political, tribal, ethnic or personal considerations. As the literature shows, to effectively tackle political corruption, governments ought to enforce the laws regardless of the status of the alleged perpetrators of political corruption (Gray, 2015; Mafukata, 2013; Mbaku, 1999).

9.3.3 The Right to Information Law

The research participants urged the government to ensure the passage of the Right to Information Bill to back citizens and media practitioners' quest for information to facilitate transparency and accountability. One male student said,

I think the right to information bill is important and should be passed into law to facilitate access to information to promote transparency and accountability. Also, there should be a political will to address issues of corruption. (Yeboah, November 9, 2017).

Similarly, other participants, like this investigative journalist, emphasized the need for the right to information law:

I think the right to information bill should be passed and state should take outcomes of investigative works seriously. If you do your story, you endure all the risks and the dangers, and you come out with a story, you want change to happen. So if that change occurs, you are motivated to go ahead and do more, but if it does not occur and they behave as if you are the problem, sometimes it is very discouraging. (Kwadwo, October 17, 2017).

As these excerpts suggest, the Ghanaian government has, therefore, been encouraged to pass the right to information bill into law to facilitate the watchdog work of the private mass media.

The right to information law is a crucial anti-corruption tool that contributes to transparency and accountability by making citizens and media's requests for public information mandatory so that corrupt government officials cannot deny access to information that can incriminate them. The government should, therefore, pass the right to information bill into law to empower citizens and civil societies, including the media, to access relevant information to fight political corruption in line with the international agreements (African Union, 2004; Arnold & Lal, 2012; Jarso, 2010; Srivastava, 2016; UN, 2004).

9.3.4 Resourcing the State Anti-Corruption Agencies

The participants suggested that the government should resource the state anti-corruption bodies and, to enable them to function effectively, make them independent of executive control. As one academic in this study explained,

The office of the public prosecutor cannot be a sole panacea for corruption. It is going to be subjected to the several challenges that other anti-corruption bodies are faced with now that is making them inefficient in dealing with corruption. And I am not so much against the office of the special public prosecutor, but there are other anti-corruption agencies. What are the challenges facing them? What is

CHRAJ doing? So why don't we resource those that are existing now to work while we are waiting for that one to be established? (Fosu, November 6, 2017).

Political commitment to anti-corruption efforts coupled with well-resourced and independent anti-corruption bodies will bring the problem of political corruption under control.

The results show that state anti-corruption bodies are not well-resourced and independent enough to fight political corruption, as in most developing democracies (Klitgaard, 1988; Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2013). As a result, the government should properly resource these state anti-corruption bodies and make them independent of executive control by reducing the appointing powers of the executive to prevent the ruling political party loyalists from heading them.

9.3.5 Review of the Legal Regime

Most participants suggested that corruption should be a high-risk venture in Ghana. As one academic and anti-corruption activist in this study argued,

So in Ghana, I think that we have made a corruption a low-risk enterprise that people have almost all the time gotten away with corruption... So if I did it today and I got away with it, I will do it tomorrow. Because we have made it a low-risk thing, until such time that we will make it a high-risk enterprise that when you are caught, the law will deal with you, I think corruption will be very difficult to fight. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

Participants argued that because acts of corruption are considered misdemeanors in the eyes of the law, the sanctions for corruption offenses are not strong enough deterrents. Hence, they recommended that corruption offenses be regarded as a felony and be severely punished. In other words, they would become a high-risk crime.

As well, some participants expressed the view that the 1992 Constitution of Ghana should be amended to reduce the excessive powers of the executive arm of government to address political corruption in the country. One journalist expressed his frustrations with the law:

The constitution has given the executive president every power to do whatever he/she wants, and I believe that it is a bigger problem. With the kind of democracy we are practicing, it has been the foundation for political corruption. Because, for instance, when a political party comes into power, almost everybody who heads an institution is sacked. And then the political party that has come to power will replace almost everybody – district chief executives, chief executive officers of the state institution, every public-private institution, or board. So our laws must be amended to suit societal or public interests because without doing that, I think we will be fighting a lost battle. (Osei, November 9, 2017).

This excerpt indicates that because the executive arm of government is too powerful and partisan, members of the executive fail to prosecute their colleagues and allies implicated in political corruption. Most participants in this study, therefore, called for changes in the constitution to curtail the powers of the executive president.

The secondary data points to a similar finding. Many people and civil society organizations have expressed concerns about the extensive powers that the 1992 Constitution grants to the executive arm of government (Ghana Web, 2016; Prempeh, 2016). One former Minister of State for Economic Planning and Regional Integration (Dr. Paa Kwasi Nduom) in Ghana, for example, argues that the executive president wields too much power and can do anything he desires (Ghana Web, 2016). According to Dr. Nduom, “The legislature has become ineffective because those who have to scrutinize the president and his ministers are the same people sitting in Parliament, approving anything from the executive” (Ghana Web, 2016, p. 1). This legislature, which is supposed to exercise oversight functions over the executive, has become an appendage of the executive body. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana should be amended to curtail the powers of the executive, to ensure strong checks and balances and to thus address political corruption in the country.

The results show that excessive presidential powers in prosecutorial and appointing mandates enshrined in the constitution do not allow for non-partisan enforcement of anti-corruption laws to prosecute alleged offenders and sanction them if convicted. The results also indicate that due to this concentration of power in the hands of the executive president, the democratic system in Ghana is set up to fail in overseeing government accountability. This imbalance of power compromises checks and balances and the rule of law, and is seen in most so-called democratic countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Oluwoye & Bissessar, 2014; Mafukata, 2015; Venter, 2012). The current findings demonstrate the need for curtailing the appointing and prosecutorial powers of the executive to prevent their interferences with the investigation, prosecution and sanctioning of corrupt offenders.

As recommended in the previous literature, the government should also repeal or amend pro-corruption legal provisions and enact and strictly enforce fit-for-purpose anti-corruption laws (Mbaku, 1999; Mafukata, 2015). Constitutional revisions should be implemented to reduce the incentives for corruption while increasing the costs (risks) of indulging in corruption. The

government should review the legal regime and make the necessary revisions to tackle political corruption in Ghana.

9.3.6 Prosecutions & Sanctions

Prosecutions and sanctions that follow due process are critical to ensuring deterrence in the fight against corruption generally (African Union, 2004; Hope, 2013; Mbaku, 1999; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; UN, 2004). Participants in this study suggested that the government should investigate and prosecute individuals engaged in acts of corruption. One female journalist put it this way:

When corrupt people exposed are prosecuted, when the prosecution runs from start to finish and when recommendations are followed through, the problem of corruption can be reduced. (Akweteiwaa, November 8, 2017).

Besides, participants urged the government to refrain from merely asking offenders to refund stolen money. The government should also prosecute and sanction corrupt offenders. As one female academic in this study emphasized,

There are laws, and they have to be enforced. The problem is enforcing the law, prosecuting people for wrongdoing. If you do that if a few people spend time in jail...but what happens is that you let them pay when they've stolen. When you let them pay when they have stolen, there is every incentive to steal because the chances that they will be caught are slim. And if they are caught is worth the risk because you know all they have to do is to pay back. (Dzifa, October 26, 2017).

This excerpt demonstrates the need for laws to be enforced to sanction corrupt offenses, particularly the imposition of custodial sentences in addition to the retrieval of stolen public resources to deter potential offenders.

The participants also suggested that the Attorney General's Department should be separate from the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Department and be made independent of the executive influence.¹⁵ They believe that this approach will catalyze the prosecution and punishment of corrupt members of the executive arm of government and allies. A female academic explained it this way:

The Ministry of Justice is part of the executive because it is a minister appointed by the president. But the Attorney General should be somebody who should spring up from the legal system otherwise we may have problems because it is the same

¹⁵ In Ghana, the Justice Department and the Attorney General's Department are combined (see <http://www.mojagd.gov.gh/>).

person [a member of the executive], and he will be hesitant. (Agyeiwaa, November 10, 2017).

Other participants confirmed this need for the Attorney General's Department to be independent of the executive to ensure the prosecution and sanctioning of alleged corrupt offenders, which would, in turn, serve as a deterrent to others. One academic and anti-corruption campaigner in this study put it this way:

In Ghana, I think that we have made a corruption a low-risk enterprise that people have almost all the time gotten away with corruption... So if I did it today and I got away with it, I will do it tomorrow. Because we have made it a low-risk thing, until such time that we will make it a high-risk enterprise that when you are caught, the law will deal with you, I think corruption will be very difficult to fight. (Takyi, November 21, 2017).

These excerpts from the interview transcripts indicate that corruption should be a high-risk venture by making the alleged corrupt offenders face the full rigors of the law without any considerations.

The findings show, as documented in other studies, successive governments have failed to prosecute members of the executive arm of government and their allies who have allegedly committed acts of corruption (Abdulai, 2009; Gray, 2015; Mafukata, 2015). Both African Union and United Nations conventions against corruption indicate that anti-corruption efforts should hinge on three main interrelated pillars: prevention, education and enforcement (African Union, 2004; United Nations, 2004). As shown in the literature, without prosecutions and sanctions – the enforcement component of the global anti-corruption framework – to serve as a deterrence, the fight against corruption cannot be won (Wrong, 2009; Mafukata, 2015; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013a).

9.3.7 Protection for Whistleblowers

Participants also urged the government to protect whistleblowers. As one female student in this study stated:

People should also be protected when they provide a hint about alleged cases of corruption to be investigated. Also, there should be a political will to address issues of corruption. (Yeboah, November 9, 2017).

This protection will encourage people to voluntarily provide information about suspected cases of political corruption, bringing attention to the acts.

Although Ghana has passed the *Whistleblowers Act 720* (Government of Ghana, 2006), participants in this study reported that the relevant authorities have failed to protect the identities of people who provide disclosures of alleged cases of political corruption. As one academic participant in this study commented:

Now the Atta Mills government passed the Whistleblowers Act which should have contributed, but it was not made to be strong, because the first act of whistleblowing, the person was victimized by the same Atta Mills government. (Gyan, November 5, 2017).

This lack of protection for whistleblowers may have discouraged other people with information from disclosing it. As part of the anti-corruption measures, the government should protect whistleblowers by not revealing their identities and offering security for them in situations where they face threats if their identities have been published. These recommendations are consistent with those in the literature (African Union, 2003; Mafukata, 2015; Hope, 2013; Schwella, 2013; UN, 2004).

It has also become a convention for successive governments to ask whistleblowers to provide full evidence of their allegations of political corruption (Center for Democratic Development, 2018). Although citizens have to alert the state of any suspicious acts of political corruption, it is not their sole responsibility to launch a full investigation to substantiate such suspicions of the alleged misappropriation of public resources. Instead, it is the duty of government and its agencies with the requisite training and resources to investigate and prosecute if there is evidence of alleged criminality.

8.4 Citizens & Civil Society Organizations

Participants suggested that an attitudinal change on the part of the people through education is imperative. As one male journalist noted,

Corruption is inherent in our society, and so I think that we need to educate the public on the impact of corruption on the country to ensure an attitudinal change. (Agyemang, November 2, 2017).

Other participants, such as a female student quoted below, proposed an intensive education of the public to build an anti-corruption culture by changing their current attitudes:

The masses should be involved in the fight against corruption. One way to do this is to educate the public about the adverse effects of political corruption. Some electorates cannot tell the dangers of political corruption. For example, when public officials are exposed to be corrupt, the people know that they are stealing

monies that belong to all of us but they cannot tell what that means for instance, that monies stolen will deprive us of getting potable water, good health care facilities and so forth. So I think that the education should be more on what the nation tends to lose when corruption takes place. If this education is done, it can make the people demand accountability from their leadership. (Ama, November 2, 2017).

Like Ama, most participants believed that if public anti-corruption education centered on the harm corruption does to the national development, citizens would cultivate a positive attitude towards anti-corruption efforts and demand political accountability. If Ghanaian citizens understood that political corruption adds to the country's challenges, such as erratic electricity, housing deficits, outdoor classrooms, limited access to potable water, poor healthcare infrastructure and poor roads, they would not blindly support allegedly corrupt political elites.

Participants also suggested that the civil society organizations should be more involved in pressurizing the government to fight political corruption. As one academic and a former journalist said:

I think our civil societies will need to start playing a proactive role. We want institutions like the Ghana Bar Association and Trade Unions, even student body groups, if possible they should have their mouthpiece beyond the existing public media to be able to discuss issues affecting them, such as the judiciary. Democracy is not just for government but for the entire citizenry. Therefore I think that civil societies have a role to play in improving the political education of the people in discussing national issues so that when the government is reluctant the pressure from the civil societies including the media will be enough to push matters through. (Quartey, November 8, 2017).

Participants urged civil societies and citizens to exploit the prevailing democratic freedoms in Ghana by playing a more active role in the fight against political corruption.

The results indicate that citizens and civil society organizations should endeavor to serve as whistleblowers, demand political accountability (by playing a watchdog role), desist from corruption, ensure responsible voting, and support media and government anti-corruption efforts. These recommendations are consistent with Mungiu-Pippidi's (2006, 2013a) call to individuals and civil society organizations to lead anti-corruption efforts. The current findings suggest that individuals and civil societies should take charge of anti-corruption efforts by mobilizing public pressure on the government to repeal pro-corruption legal provisions and enact and implement fit-for-purpose anti-corruption laws.

9.5 Summary

This chapter has presented recommendations to strengthen the media watchdog role. First, the private media ought to ensure follow-up reporting, investigative journalism, professional training, and respect for journalistic standards. Participants suggested that the private media that have demonstrated a stronger commitment to anti-corruption efforts should be supported. The government should demonstrate a practical commitment to anti-corruption efforts by ensuring media regulation, the rule of law and the right to information law, well-resourced independent anti-corruption agencies and a critical review of the legal framework. Finally, the results indicate that citizens and civil society organizations should endeavor to serve as whistleblowers, demand political accountability (by playing a watchdog role), desist from corruption, ensure responsible voting and support media and government anti-corruption efforts. The next chapter presents the conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter summarizes the study and presents policy implications and theoretical reflections, including the contributions the current research makes to knowledge about political corruption. It also discusses the study's limitations and provides recommendations for future research.

10.1 Research Summary

Since Ghana's independence in 1957, political corruption has been one of the cardinal threats to inclusive and sustainable development, democratic consolidation and general political stability. Ushering the country into the fourth republic of democratic governance, the 1992 Constitution liberalized and mandated the mass media to make meaningful contributions towards government transparency and accountability in the interests of the masses (e.g., Article 162(5), the Republic of Ghana, 1996). Since independent and free private mass media are supposedly an important player in keeping countries free of political corruption, this research has investigated if the private mass media have played any constructive role in the fight against political corruption in Ghana.

The theories of democracy, public sphere, structuration and the media watchdog were considered more relevant to explaining the complex interaction of the political system and its accompanying structural conditions, such as civil liberties, which impact the role of the private media in political corruption in Ghana. Democratic theory suggests that the sovereign power to govern resides in the citizens and that, therefore, they should be free to choose and hold their leaders accountable to serve their needs. This theory lays out critical conditions for ensuring a responsible and responsive leadership, including the separation of powers, the rule of law, multi-party elections, independent and free media and civil and political liberties (Heywood, 2012; Venter, 2012). The watchdog theory (incorporating liberal and social responsibility theories and the concept of the fourth estate) elucidates how the media contribute to anti-corruption struggles (Hatchen, 1992; McQuail, 2010). These contributions range from investigating and exposing political corruption to agenda setting, providing channels for public participation in anti-corruption discussions and mobilizing for reforms. The theory of the public sphere, in contrast, suggests that the private media contribute to the problem of political corruption by masking it and manipulating public opinion to further private interests since they (private media) are a part of the corrupt network (Habermas, 1989; Mills, 1951, 1956). The theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984)

suggests that the media's role in practice is contingent upon an interplay of both agency and structural forces, including creating and sustaining the political atmosphere for media watchdogging and demanding media practitioners have professional qualifications.

Guided by these theories, the dissertation has focused on one central research question: "Do the private mass media contribute to the problem or the solution regarding the fight against political corruption in emerging democracies such as Ghana." Based on this question, the dissertation has concentrated on three primary objectives. First, it has investigated ways in which the privately-owned mass media have contributed to either addressing or worsening the problem of political corruption in Ghana. Second, it has examined factors that either promote or compromise the media's watchdog role. Third, it has investigated ways in which the media in Ghana can be strengthened to act as a dominant anti-corruption force.

In addressing these three objectives, this study used a qualitative methodology as the most suitable approach to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the research problem and to facilitate an insightful understanding of the private media's role in political corruption. The qualitative approach was useful in capturing the historical, political, economic and socio-cultural contexts in which the current study has been situated. The investigator gathered primary data during ten-week fieldwork in Ghana. He conducted semi-structured interviews and close observations of the day-to-day media coverage of allegations of political corruption as they unfolded in real time, as well as the responses from the political groupings, the state anti-corruption bodies, the civil society, and citizens. Secondary data was also collected from multiple sources, such as media reports, journal articles, books, legislative instruments, Afrobarometer surveys, World Value surveys and reports from Media Foundations for West Africa and Reporters Without Borders. The quantitative component added a descriptive statistical dimension based on content analysis of selected media reports from Joy FM and Peace FM and relevant existing surveys, which augmented the examination of the research topic and provided another useful perspective from which to interrogate the media's watchdog role.

Some key arguments can be gleaned from and validated by this study. First, the findings demonstrate that private media are simultaneously a part of the problem of and the solution to political corruption. On the one hand, private media competition and the absence of government censorship and criminal libel law have incentivized the private media to fight political corruption in some ways, including exposing political corruption and providing avenues for facilitating,

broadening and enriching the national discourse on political corruption. They also fight for political accountability by putting corruption on the political agenda and acting as a pressure group for the institutionalization of the necessary reforms. Moreover, they create awareness about the negative impact of corruption on national development and the rule of law to encourage people to support anti-corruption efforts. These findings corroborate past research (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Camaj, 2012; Gray, 2015; Stravastiva, 2016; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000).

This study shows that the watchdog role of the private mass media in Ghana has achieved some limited positive results, such as retrieval of stolen state resources, sanctioning of corrupt offenders and legal and institutional reforms. These findings support previous research observations (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Camaj, 2012; Gray, 2015; Stravastiva, 2016; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). In the African context, Gray (2015), for example, provides a more recent observation of the private media watchdog role against high-profile political corruption in Tanzania. The current study further shows that the performance of media watchdog functions against political corruption is typically impossible without media pluralism and freedoms as documented in previous studies (Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Camaj, 2012; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). In their classic work entitled *Free Press Is Bad News for Corruption*, Brunetti, and Weder (2003), for example, demonstrate the ability of the independent media to tackle corruption when there is press freedom.

On the other hand, media commercialism, pluralism, and freedoms are not adequate safeguards for addressing the problem of political corruption. This study shows that many private mass media have failed to exploit the current civil and political freedoms, including independence and freedom of the press, to assert their critical watchdog role against political corruption. In contrast, this study shows that private media actively contribute to the problem of political corruption through biased reporting, propaganda peddling, indulgence in corruption and the pursuit of private ownership and political party interests to the detriment of public benefits. As Vaidya (2005) argues, "In the presence of constitutional safeguards that protect the press's ability to collect and publicize evidence of corruption, the press might not act as a watchdog for the public but might prefer to use evidence to bargain with the intent of sharing the rents from corruption" (p. 668). As some studies indicate, some media houses use their evidence of corruption as a bargaining power to negotiate with the perpetrators for their share of the proceeds, which result in their refusal to

publish the corruption scandals provided they are satisfied with their portion of the loot (Besley & Prat, 2006; McMillian & Zoido, 2004; Warren, 2005). Other media outlets also decide to pitch camps with political parties for their benefit rather than fighting this social canker (McMillian & Zoido, 2004; Vaidya, 2005; Warren, 2005). Unsurprisingly, according to Omojola (2010, p. 33), media commercialism does not only hamper media watchdogging against [political] corruption but also compromises the practice of professional journalism. The current analysis supports the argument that media commercialism, pluralism and freedom provide potential opportunities for fighting corruption and for contributing to the problem simultaneously.

Second, agency factors are as important as structural factors in shaping the actual role and conduct of the private media regarding political corruption. This research indicates that an interplay of factors – both external and internal – has impacted the watchdog role of the private mass media. The structural conditions, such as free speech, press freedom, media pluralism, national historical legacies, the support of some state anti-corruption bodies and political competition, provide a positive environment within which critical journalism can thrive and check abuses of power. These findings support past studies (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Camaj, 2012; Fell, 2005; Gray, 2015; Stravastiva, 2016; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000). While this positive and open political atmosphere is important, agency factors are required – particularly the firm commitment of private media owners and practitioners to anti-corruption endeavors – to activate the performance of media watchdog responsibilities to society. Other positive agency factors observed in this study include a sense of national patriotism and prestige among media owners and media competition for listenership that intersect with democratic freedoms to promote critical media watchdogging against political corruption.

On the other hand, this study shows that structural and agency factors frustrate the struggles against political corruption. The negative structural factors impeding media watchdog functions include limited access to information and lack of a firm commitment by the central government to acting upon compelling evidence of corruption exposed by the media. Similarly, despite the enabling democratic climate exemplified in press freedoms, agency factors – such as partisanship, ownership interests, lack of professionalism, poor compensation, lack of financial independence and media corruption – have powerfully undermined the media watchdog role. These findings corroborate past research (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Jarso, 2010; Omojola, 2010; Stravastiva, 2016). Omojola (2010), for example, notes that the private mass media's desire "to break even and

make a profit on the platform of commercialism has invoked the fortitude of celebrating the sources of advertising incomes” (p. 33). He adds, “This corporate spirit has found its way into the heart of the typical Nigerian journalist who seems to have carved into corruption tendencies” (Omojola, 2010, p. 33). He observes that this situation is worsened by the fact that many journalists in Nigeria are “poorly paid, thereby resulting in this vice of corruption that is demonstrated in the form of bribery and other types of indirectly solicited gifts” (Omojola, 2010, p. 33). The current research, however, shows that some well-paid journalists also indulge in corruption to accumulate more wealth. As Coronel (2008) and Ostini and Fung (2002) argue, despite the equal importance of these agency factors in shaping the behavior and conduct of the private mass media and practitioners, media academics often focus on structural influences on the media watchdog role.

Third, the lack of strong political will to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to well-substantiated media revelations of political corruption discourages investigative journalism. Most journalists in this study reported that government’s inaction on substantiated cases of alleged political corruption exposed by the private media had dampened their spirit to do more investigative journalism. When members of the government executive protect their parochial interests by consistently obstructing the work of the state anti-corruption bodies, why should journalists conduct risky, costly and time-consuming investigations, especially if the authorities are not likely to act in the face of compelling evidence? This finding confirms previous studies that have found that weak or no government support for an anti-corruption agenda has been a major impediment in the fight against corruption, particularly political corruption in sub-Saharan Africa (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2011; Mafukata, 2015; Otusanya, 2011; Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2013; Venter, 2012). Previous studies have documented this limited support for an anti-corruption agenda and the reasons for it (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2011; Mafukata, 2015; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Warren, 2005, Venter, 2012). When political parties and candidates depend on corruption to fund political campaigns, to retain or win political power and to enrich themselves and their collaborators, is it realistic to expect leadership to adopt a genuine anti-corruption agenda? Unsurprisingly, this study shows that the successive governments’ poor response to hard-to-dispute media exposures of corruption is a major disincentive to independent and free media committed to exposing corruption and pressing consistently for political accountability.

Fourth, the concentration of prosecutorial and appointing powers in the executive arm of government frustrates the fight against corruption perpetrated by the executive members and their

collaborators. In several instances of media exposure of political corruption, this study shows that the executive arm of government takes episodic measures such as asking the offender to refund the money without prosecuting and sanctioning them severely to serve as the deterrent to others. In other situations, as some previous studies show, although media exposures of political corruption spark public outrage, the government fails to follow through on initial promises to take concrete action by retrieving resources and institutionalizing comprehensive reforms to prevent similar occurrences (Abdulai, 2009; Phiri, 2008). The executive uses its excessive appointing and supervisory powers over the Attorney General's Department (responsible for authorizing investigations and prosecutions) to frustrate anti-corruption struggles by shielding the corrupt executive members or politically connected people from prosecutions and sanctions. Past research shows that the excessive concentration of political power in the executive body is a major factor responsible for uncontrolled political corruption in most sub-Saharan African countries (Abdulai, 2009; Gray, 2015; Hope, 2013; Mafukata, 2015; Uneke, 2010; Wrong, 2009). There is reason to believe that the current democratic system in Ghana has been set up to fail when it comes to ensuring government accountability, and that it will continue to fail until reforms are implemented to reverse the excessive concentration of power in the president to promote pragmatic checks and balances.

Fifth, if the electoral choices facing voters barely provide any solid hope for robust anti-corruption reforms in developing democracies such as Ghana, social actors (including private media) are more likely to pitch camps to advance their selfish interests. This phenomenon has played out in the Ghanaian media field as some media houses and practitioners have affiliated with the major political parties – the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party – to drive their personal and political party interests at the expense of the public good. As the literature shows, corruption flourishes in countries that fail to consistently enact and enforce fit-for-purpose laws to address corruption and conflict of interests (Mbaku, 1999; Rose-Ackerman, 1978; Warren, 2005; Venter, 2012). Warren (2005) argues that some influential social actors, such as the private media, align with political parties to pursue their private interests rather than fighting corruption in a democratic environment in which the government fails to demonstrate seriousness in tackling corruption.

Sixth, the independent private mass media that demonstrate a practical commitment to fighting political corruption in developing democracies should be supported. This study shows that

many private mass media have become vulnerable to the corrupt network of powerful actors. These actors exploit private media's financial dependence on advertising incomes by using their ability to grant or withdraw advertising contracts and financial support. Through these actions, they control and manipulate the content of media reportage to serve their interests, thus undermining the fight against political corruption. In the midst of this high temptation to yield to powerful interests to generate income and avoid media business extinction, this study shows that some private mass media have been brave enough to stand their ground in their determination to honor their social responsibility to society by contributing to transparency and accountability through groundbreaking investigations. They use their limited resources to conduct investigative journalism that has driven political activism and resulted in some substantial legal and political reforms. They also risk their lives by doing these investigations that speak directly to power. This selfless demonstration of independent media commitment to anti-corruption efforts has encouraged non-governmental organizations and development partners to provide resources to support them to do more and to prevent their possible co-option by the corrupt. This support should not compromise the independence and freedom of the media mass media outlets that benefit from this assistance in more aggressively fighting political corruption.

In conclusion, the media pluralism and freedom and democratic practice are themselves not sufficient buffers against political corruption. The framing of the national constitution to create robust checks and balances and the commitment of major stakeholders, particularly the political leadership, to ensure that the political establishment serves public interests in the best possible manner are the most critical conditions for advancing government accountability.

10.2 Policy Implications

The findings of this study have critical implications for the role of the media, government, citizens and civil society organizations regarding advancing government accountability. On the media front, the results show that many private mass media and practitioners have not adhered to journalistic principles to contribute meaningfully to anti-corruption efforts in Ghana. In this regard, research participants recommend that the private mass media and practitioners should strive to uphold high journalistic standards by not allowing political party influences, corruption or private interests to color political corruption reporting. Participants suggested that untrained journalists should be made to acquire the appropriate professional training to facilitate the performance of their watchdog functions. According to the participants, this training could be achieved through

collaborative efforts by media houses, Ghana Journalists Association, civil society organizations (such as Media Foundations for West Africa), School of Journalism and Communication Studies and the National Media Commission (the Ghanaian media regulatory body). Recently, Media Response and MTN Ghana organized training workshops for to help Ghanaian media practitioners keep up with the new journalistic demands arising from the changing media environment and the rapid technological advances, including new sophisticated gadgets for investigative journalism (Ghana News Agency, 2018; Ghana Web, 2017). Expanding and regularizing these kinds of initiative can improve the knowledge base, skills, and attitudes of media practitioners and bring about responsible and professional journalistic practice.

Additionally, the findings show that the weak state of investigative journalism in Ghana has paved the way for political corruption to blossom since the chances of exposing and punishing the perpetrators within the confines of the law are low. It is, therefore, important for the media to inject funds into investigative journalism as part of their contribution to the anti-corruption efforts in fulfillment of their watchdog responsibilities to society. Civil society organizations, business corporations, and international development partners, such as the World Bank, could also establish funds to support media houses that have demonstrably committed themselves to investigative anti-corruption journalism. In an attempt to political and business using their sponsorship to control the private media, Deane (2016) rightly argues for funding to support media houses and journalists committed to anti-corruption efforts in developing countries.

Additionally, this study shows that media corruption reporting often relies on politicians' allegations of political corruption against members of the other political divide and counter-allegations from the alleged offenders. Research participants suggested that these private media houses should do investigative journalism to inform their anti-corruption reporting. Similarly, the results indicate that the failure of the private mass media to do anti-corruption follow-up reporting to ensure resolution of political corruption matters has often led to policy makers, implementers and law-enforcement officials to relax when addressing corruption issues. Against this backdrop, research participants recommended that the media houses do more consistent follow-up anti-corruption reporting to ensure reasonable conclusions of alleged acts of corruption exposed.

On the government front, this research shows that successive governments have mostly failed to prosecute and sanction members of the executive arm of government and their allies who have committed specific acts of corruption. Sitting governments are, therefore, urged to muster

courage and deal with people and entities that attempt to sacrifice national development and security through corruption for their parochial interests. They should uphold the rule of law, protect whistleblowers, pass the Right to Information Bill (RTI) into law, and ensure effective media regulation devoid of partisanship. They should also resource state anti-corruption bodies adequately and make them independent of the executive control, and review the existing legal framework to remove structural incentives and opportunities for political corruption. This strong political will to address corruption is critical for translating the national anti-corruption framework into action through prevention, enforcement, and sanctions. These recommendations are generally consistent with the international framework for addressing (political) corruption (African Union, 2004; United Nations, 2004).

The findings also indicate that the absence of partnership between the National Communication Authority and National Media Commission has compromised media standards due to inadequate enforcement of relevant regulations. A healthy collaboration between these two regulatory bodies would ensure that media houses that fail to uphold set media standards have their frequencies withdrawn. Moreover, research participants suggested that there should be licensing requirements for media houses and practitioners to prevent people without necessary training from practicing by revoking licenses of practicing journalists and media stations who fail to uphold pre-defined journalistic standards. Although they are considered ineffective mechanisms for ensuring media standards (The Conversation, 2017a) and a threat to independent and free media (Strasser, 2010), licensing reforms devoid of political control and partisanship may help improve the professional conduct of journalists and media houses (The Conversation, 2017b). This policy recommendation, however, requires a broader consultation among the major stakeholders, such as the government, the media, and civil societies, to build consensus on whether licensing reforms are the way to go. Other participants in this study emphasized the need to strengthen self-regulation in the media industry through collaborative efforts between media practitioners, media houses, and Ghana Journalist Association and to ensure conformity with sound journalistic principles. Such a collective professionalization through media professional associations for creating and enforcing media ethics and standards are critical to advancing responsible journalism (Gadzepko, 2008; Windahl & Rosengren, 1978). Lastly, this study shows that individuals and civil society organizations have contributed to defending rights and freedoms of the media, conducting anti-corruption research, creating anti-corruption awareness and prevention in collaboration with the

media and leaking corruption-related information to the media for follow-up. As this study, however, shows, participants expressed the need for these non-state actors to much more by serving as whistleblowers, demanding political accountability, desisting from corruption, ensuring responsible voting, and supporting media anti-corruption efforts. The media and civil society organizations, including religious bodies, can help educate the public on the effects of political corruption on national development and urge them to contribute to addressing Ghanaian political corruption. The above recommendations reflect the anti-corruption literature (Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Mungiu-Pippidi, (2006, 2013a).

In summary, while the call for reclassifying corruption as a felony for harsher sentencing than a misdemeanor (Duodu, 2017) is important, such reclassification can only provide a meaningful deterrence if only other measures are simultaneously pursued. These measures may include political commitment to anti-corruption efforts, public shaming, and effective surveillance to detect acts of corruption, increasing public awareness of harms corruption causes to society, and strengthening the law enforcement to be speedy, independent and professional in investigating, processing and adjudicating cases (African Union, 2004; Klitgaard, 1988; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; United Nations, 2004). Other measures that government needs to consider may include a significant reduction of opportunities for corruption by eliminating or limiting discretionary and monopoly powers of government officials (Clarke, 2012; Klitgaard, 1988; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013b). As a way of encouraging citizens, the media, and civil society groups to contribute towards transparency and accountability and check political corruption, Ghana should also consider passing the right to information bill to facilitate speedy and mandatory access to public information.

10.3 Theoretical Implications

This section critically examines whether the current findings corroborate or refute the theoretical claims that guided this study. By so doing, it also analyzes the current research contributions to knowledge. This study was based on insights from the theories of structuration, public sphere, democracy, and media watchdog (social responsibility, the fourth estate, and liberal) as previously discussed. First, the findings substantiate the theories of democracy and the media as a watchdog. Ghana's transition from a military rule to constitutional democracy in 1993 ended a culture of media silence in which intolerance for a critical and free mass media had long characterized the country. In contrast, the implementation of the democratic constitutional rule has brought civil and

political freedoms. This research has demonstrated that these freedoms and rights – which democratic theory emphasizes – have created an enabling political climate, such as press freedom and the liberalization of the media sector, for the performance of media watchdog functions in the first place.

This research, however, demonstrates that some private mass media have not translated these freedoms into an efficient performance of their watchdog functions due to private interests as theorized (Ansah, 1991; Curran, 2005; Habermas, 1989; Dahhlgren & Sparks, 1995; Mills, 1951, 1956). The research shows, for example, that the private media houses owned by politicians have become the propaganda wing of the political parties. Politicians use these media houses to pursue parochial personal and partisan interests. This development confirms Mills (1999) and Habermas' (1989) claim that mass media have become an instrument in the hands of influential people to serve their interests at the expense of public benefits due to the abandonment of the media watchdog functions.

Second, the findings fail to entirely support the liberal theory of the mass media, which suggests that the liberalization of the mass media via unfettered market competition will result in press freedom, thus promoting an effective performance of the media watchdog functions (McQuail, 2010; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963). The current study shows that financially struggling mass media houses easily fall prey to political and business capture for funding to survive. This study also indicates that well-established mass media houses may also align with businesses, government and political parties who are their main advertisers and printing contract providers. As a result of these ties, these media outlets come under pressure to drop the publication of political corruption scandals that implicate their major partners (sponsors) in the mass media business. Similarly, this study partly supports the social responsibility theory of the mass media, which emphasizes that profitability or private gains should not override the media's watchdog responsibilities to society (Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 2010). The findings show that some private media outlets perform watchdog functions by fighting political corruption while others do not.

Third, this research supports Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration by showing that an interplay of multiple factors – external (structural) and internal (non-structural) – affect the conduct of private mass media and practitioners towards their watchdog responsibilities to society. The democratic freedoms provided by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana have motivated the media to perform their watchdog role. These freedoms, however, would not have been possible without the

support of individuals and civil society organizations that played a major role in transitioning Ghana to democratic constitutional rule. Citizens and civil society organizations have also continued to defend democratic freedoms, including media rights and press freedom, to ensure the performance of media watchdog functions in the country. This evidence demonstrates that actors and social structures impact each other in a continuous process that reflects the duality of the structure in Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration.

More importantly, this research shows that without media owners and practitioners' determination to tackle political corruption and belief in their ability to do so, the enabling structural conditions for the performance of media watchdog functions are meaningless. Together with the enabling structural climate, the commitment of these media owners and practitioners to fighting political corruption and other forms of motivation – such as national patriotism and ideas about the media as a calling to serve public interests – have preserved some media watchdog functions.

Again, this research supports Giddens' (1984) dialectic concept of power, which suggests that nobody holds absolute power, the ability to intervene or to refrain from intervening depending on one's interests and a degree of access to different resources, including material and human. This dialectic concept of power has played out in the media field as some private media owners and practitioners have deliberately failed to expose and fight political corruption implicating businesses, government, and political parties to which they are affiliated. On the other hand, some private mass media have contributed to anti-corruption efforts simply because they have the power to do so and they are not ready to give in to interests that conflict with theirs. In this sense, the private mass media have become a field of power struggles as different actors try to advance their conflicting interests.

Fourth, this study rationalizes the need for the critical watchdog role of the mass media to support development efforts in contrast to the development and authoritarian press theories, which oppose the notion that the media should perform critical oversight functions over the government. The findings in this study demonstrate that, without the media playing a more critical watchdog role, several cases of political corruption scandals exposed by private media would have been swept under the carpet by successive governments.

Fifth, this study indicates that there is an aspect of the authoritarian press theory, at least in developing democratic political contexts such as Ghana. The findings show that successive

governments try to control news content of some private media, not by way of specific censorship laws but through the offer or withdrawal of funding such as advertising contracts.

Sixth, this research partially corroborates the central premise of the democratic participant theory that the profit maximization motive of private mass media hinders their watchdog performance. The findings partly support this claim as some private mass media houses have abandoned their watchdog functions in return for sponsorship deals, including advertising contracts from the government of the day and powerful business corporations.

In conclusion, the findings partially substantiate the media's watchdog theory linked to liberal theory, social responsibility theory and the concept of the fourth estate in democratic theory. As the middle-ground school argues, although the media have gravitated towards serving the interests of influential people, they have not entirely abandoned their watchdog responsibilities towards society (Barnett & Gaber, 2001). In contributing to knowledge and social theory, this research has validated and disconfirmed some of the claims of the assumptions used to guide this study based on new data from Ghana located in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings have thrown light on the limits of the generalizability of the Western-originated theories that informed the current study.

In addition to investigating the generalizability of the Western-originated theories in a non-Western context, this research has expanded our substantive understanding of the contested watchdog role of the private mass media regarding corruption control using new primary data collected in Ghana. Previous research has focused on the positive role and the ability of the private mass media to confront political corruption without paying much attention to how the media may also contribute to the problem (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014; Stupenhurst & O'Brien, 2000; Vaidya, 2005). Also, previous studies have overly focused on the structural influences, such as press freedoms, on the watchdog role of the mass media without bringing agency factors into the analysis (Colonel, 2008; Ostini & Fung, 2002). This study has contributed to filling these important gaps in the existing literature.

10.4 Study's Limitations & Recommendations for Further Research

As the first Ghanaian and African empirical study using interdisciplinary theories – structuration, the public sphere, media watchdog, and democracy – to examine the media's role in political corruption, this dissertation has made unique theoretical and empirical contributions to knowledge in several academic disciplines. Examples of these disciplines include communication

studies, sociology, and political science. Because several factors – economic, political, legal, and socio-cultural – interact to shape corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, such integrated theoretical approach is recommended for future studies to foster a holistic understanding of corruption and to inform anti-corruption responses.

Furthermore, since the qualitative content analysis of the media reports selected from Joy and Peace FM electronic archives were not representative of the overall private media coverage of Ghanaian political corruption, future research is recommended to use both qualitative and quantitative content analysis. This content analysis should include extensive secondary data from the electronic and print media on political corruption reporting. In addition, the use of small number of informants in this dissertation make the generalizability of the findings to different contexts inappropriate. Hence, a quantitative study based on the nationally representative sample of about 2500 is recommended to investigate the contested watchdog role of the mass media in Ghana and elsewhere. In particular, research that will use a mixed-method approach is highly preferred to provide a comprehensive and comparative analysis of both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

This study also used primarily highly educated informants ranging from academics, politicians, anti-corruption activists, and media practitioners with extensive knowledge and experiences in the relationship between media and political corruption to accomplish the research goal. Future research is, therefore, recommended to include informants with or without high school qualifications and capture their perspectives on the relationship between the Ghanaian private mass media and political corruption. As well, given the purpose of this study and resource constraints, including time and funding, this study did not capture the perspectives of victims of specific political corruption cases cited. As a result, future studies should explore the perceptions and experiences of these victims regarding the harms they have suffered because of political corruption, and examine their perspectives on Ghanaian anti-corruption efforts and the best way forward.

Additionally, contrary to the claims of social responsibility and liberal theories, and the fourth estate concept derived from the democratic theory, this study has demonstrated that some profit-oriented private mass media in Ghana have jettisoned their watchdog functions. The limitations of these theories have, however, lent support for another mass media theory – the democratic participant theory – which emphasizes that the community should have their non-profit

media to fight their cause. Future research is, therefore, recommended to investigate whether the nonprofit community-based mass media organizations can resist political, social and business pressures to perform their watchdog responsibilities to society.

Finally, as this dissertation focused on traditional mainstream media, future studies should explore the role of social media platforms in anti-corruption struggles. The technological advancement in recent decades has revolutionized the media landscape with the advent of social media platforms, such as the Twitter and Facebook (Asomah, 2015; CliqAfrica, 2016; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Kim, 2011; StatCounter, 2018; Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014). Increasingly, this social media is facilitating access to information sharing and platform for demanding constitutional and institutional reforms (Asomah, 2015; Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014). Future is recommended to investigate the prospects of using this new online media to fight political corruption in developing democracies such as Ghana. Research indicates that 90% of average three and a half hours that a Ghanaian uses to browse the Internet is for social media (CliqAfrica, 2016). Facebook is the most widely used social media network site in Ghana since it commands 82% of the social media market share in the country (StatCounter, 2018). Future research exploring the prospects of using Facebook to fight Ghanaian political corruption will make significant contributions to knowledge in communication and anti-corruption fields.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Your age: ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75 and over

Gender:

Education: ☐ High school certificate ☐ College ☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor's degree ☐

Master's degree ☐ Doctorate degree

Marital status: ☐ Married ☐ Single ☐ Divorced ☐ Other (specify)

Your religious group: ☐ Christian ☐ Muslim ☐ Traditionalist ☐ Other (specify)

Political Party affiliation: ☐ Pro-government ☐ Pro-opposition

Occupation:

1. MASS MEDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO FIGHTING POLITICAL CORRUPTION

- I. Based on your experiences, reports, or observations, in what ways do you think the privately owned mass media institutions have contributed to fighting political corruption in Ghana since 2001?

2. MASS MEDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION

- I. Based on your experiences, in what ways do think the privately-owned mass media institutions have contributed to the problem of political corruption in Ghana since 2001?
- II. In your view, what are the main forms of media corruption in Ghana?
- III. Based on your observations, do you think that media corruption is a widespread problem in Ghana? Please provide reason(s) for your answer.

3. FACTORS PROMOTING MEDIA WATCHDOGGING

- I. What factors (conditions) do you think have motivated the privately-owned mass media institutions to contribute to fighting political corruption in Ghana?
- II. What do you think can be done to further create more enabling conditions for the mass media's fight against political corruption?

4. FACTORS COMPROMISING MEDIA'S WATCHDOG ROLE

- I. Based on your personal observations, what factors have contributed to privately owned mass media's involvement in corruption?

- II. What do you think can be done to address the mass media's involvement in, or support for people/organization linked to corruption?

5. INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Investigative journalism is the mass media's key tool for unmasking corruption.

- I. Without identifying the specific individuals and groups suspected or convicted of political corruption, what social intervention programs plagued with political corruption have been exposed through investigative journalism? What were government responses, and your general impressions on whether or not such responses addressed the core issues that gave rise to the corruption?
- II. In your view, how strong is investigative journalism in Ghana?
- III. Based on your experience, what factors impede investigative journalism in Ghana?
- IV. What do you think must be done to encourage and strengthen investigative journalism?

6. THE WAY FORWARD

- II. What do you think the private mass media should do differently to help address the problem of political corruption more effectively?
- I. What do you think can be done to enable the private mass media perform their watchdog functions more effectively in Ghana?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



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Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: *Ghana in Search of Governmental Accountability in Addressing Political Corruption: Are the Private Mass Media Part of the Solution or the Problem?*

Researcher(s): Joseph Yaw Asomah, Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan, 1 306 966 6947, jya759@mail.usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr Hongming Cheng, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan, 1 306 966 5913, hoc699@mail.usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- This research seeks to expand social scientists' substantive knowledge about the extent to which privately-owned mass media have contributed to addressing, or aggravating the problem of political corruption since 2001 when the criminal libel was repealed in Ghana.
- The research specifically intends to gain insight into (1) ways in which the mass media have contributed to fighting political corruption in Ghana, (2) how the mass media have contributed to the problem of political corruption in Ghana, and (3) factors that condition or explain the mass media's relationship to political corruption in Ghana.

Procedures:

- One-on-one, in-person and in-depth interviews will be carried out with participants who agree to be interviewed. The interviews will digitally be recorded (audio-taped), pending participant's consent. The interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and analyzed by the student researcher, using qualitative thematic content analysis facilitated by qualitative software (NVIVO 11).

- Your commitment to the study involves participation in one in-person interview with the researcher, which will last about sixty minutes. The interview will be arranged at a time and in your organization, or any safe public place in Accra convenient to you.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role in the study.
- You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts. However, you have the option to waive the transcript review through the following statement:

I would like to review the transcripts of this interview: Yes No

Funded by: This research has received no funding from any individual or agency.

Potential Risks:

- There is a minimal risk that your discussions about political corruption may cause you to experience some psychological distress or discomfort in view of the harms, for example, underprivileged people may be suffering as they do not get the needed assistance due to the problem of political corruption.
- You may end your involvement in the research project at any time if you feel uncomfortable sharing details about your experiences regarding the research topic, or may choose not to answer any interview questions you feel uncomfortable discussing.

Potential Benefits:

- The research aims to enrich academic and policy debates about the mass media's potential role in contributing to addressing or worsening the problem of political corruption. As a participant, it is intended to offer you an opportunity for self-reflection that will empower you to effectively make contributions about the ways in which the mass media may contribute to addressing political corruption, and ways in which they are not.

Compensation:

- Upon completion of the interview, you will receive an honorarium valued at twenty Ghana cedis (GHS 20) in the form of gift card redeemable in Ghana toward your transportation cost for the interview. Should you withdraw from the research during the interview, you will receive a partial honorarium of ten Ghana cedis (also in the form of a gift card redeemable in Ghana) for your traveling cost.

Confidentiality:

- All data collected through this research project is confidential. You will not be asked to provide your name or any identifiable details about you in the interview. If you do mention identifiable details, they will be omitted from the interview transcript to safeguard confidentiality.

- The data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences. However, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (such as where and what you work, the neighborhood where you live, your party affiliation, and specific activities you are involved in) will be removed from our report.
- **Storage of Data:**
 - The research team and professional transcriptionist will have access to the original data of the study. Data security during transportation will be ensured by password protecting electronic files and storing hard copies of the project materials in a locked filing cabinet to which only the research team has access.
 - All data will be stored at the Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan. Electronic files will be password protected and hard copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University. Materials will be stored at the University for five years after the work is published or otherwise presented. Electronic data will be destroyed by file deletion, and hard copies will be destroyed by shredding.
 - All data sets and paper documents, including consent forms, will be uploaded to a secure University of Saskatchewan electronic data storage site, and paper documents will be destroyed thereafter before the researcher leaves Ghana for Canada. No paper documents will therefore be transported from Ghana to Canada.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position (for example, employment, legal rights, and access to services) or how you will be treated.
- Should you wish to withdraw, the digital recording and/or written transcription of your interview will be destroyed, along with any e-mail correspondence between you and the research team.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until results have been disseminated. After this point, it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please contact Joseph Yaw Asomah at the e-mail address or phone number listed above.

Questions or Concerns:

- Any questions or concerns about this study can be directed to the Joseph Yaw Asomah or Dr Hongming Cheng (see the contact information above).
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office

ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call collect to 1-306-966-2975.

Consent

Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____ <i>Name of Participant</i>	_____ <i>Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>
_____ <i>Researcher's Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>	

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT

Oral Consent: If on the other hand the consent has been obtained orally, this should be recorded. For example, the Consent Form dated, and signed by the researcher(s) indicating that “I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant’s consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.” In addition, consent may be audio or videotaped.

_____ <i>Name of Participant</i>	_____ <i>Researcher's Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>
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APPENDIX C: NEWS ARTICLES SELECTED FROM JOY FM (GHANA)

Investigative Journalism & Follow-Up Reporting

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APPENDIX D: NEWS ARTICLES SELECTED FROM PEACE FM (GHANA)

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Individuals & Civil Society

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Investigations & Follow-Up Reporting

Nil

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